

Global Beats: DJ Krush, Anthony B, Azymuth, Daara J and more

XLR8R

83
DECEMBER
2004

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND CULTURE

BEST OF
2004

Matthew Dear

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¹Base camp. Mt. Everest. 17,500 ft. above sea level. ²A Sherpa is warming up a hearty yak meat stew. ³He is wearing an adidas Base Camp Puffa jacket, pants, boots, and chalk belt. ⁴In the distance, Reinhold Messner becomes the first man to ascend Everest without

supplemental oxygen. He is the inspiration for the 2004 adidas Everest collection available at adidas.com/originals ⁵A White-tailed eagle stretches its wings before soaring into the heavens. ⁶Yak



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ED'S RANT ¡ADIÓS!



Tomas, adorned with paste-on mustache and sideburns, survives another deadline.

Change is good, necessary and inevitable; as such, it's time for my fond editor's farewell. Actually, I'll still be lurking in these pages as managing editor for a spell, but as of next issue we welcome Vivian Host to the top of the masthead. To recap my writing resume in one sentence: homemade comics, homemade music/skateboarding zines, college papers on Rakim and Rastafari, Quango, Rhino, Six Degrees liner notes, reggae book preface, *Ben Is Dead* contributor, *Urb* columnist, *XLR8R* columnist, managing editor, editor. That's about 20 years of balling up first drafts and tossing them over my shoulder, staring through bloodshot eyes at glowing screens for 14-hour stretches and even some creative appropriation at Kinkos locations throughout Northern California. But no time in my writing career has been more rewarding than the past five years as *XLR8R*'s editor.

Whether it was office bashment sessions, staff lunches at Vietnamese restaurants or emailing 35 writers their updates, my position always had a fair balance of stress and rewards. Some personal highlights of my tenure include our cover of Riz Maslen against a gorgeous wallpaper pattern (#34), "breaking" the broken beat story in America with our Deigo and IG Culture cover (#48), visiting DJ Spinna in his wall-to-wall vinyl basement (#64) and drawing parallels between electronic music and Jamaican dancehall's evolution in our "Digital Yard" profiles (#66). Actually, there hasn't been a single issue where the music we cover hasn't been personally exciting, revealing or challenging. It was always a thousand revolutions-per-second; experimental, house, techno, dub, hip-hop, funk, glitch, grime—no one could tire of it all.

The utmost irony is how much I dislike editors' introductions in magazines, period. I hate writing them (the pretentious pomp of "In this issue, we get deep into the cerebral cortex of Aphex Twin's brain!") and I hate reading other magazines' eds' intros ("Our WMC party was so sick! Blah blah blah..."). Honestly, I think our incoming editor—the fabulous New York-based Ms. Vivian Host, whom I've known since her drum & bass and rave days in LA, and from doing afterhours clubs like my 2 a.m. special "Goa Dub"—will do a much better job at explaining each issue's themes and intentions.

So, like a true music nerd, I can only leave you with this segue to our Best of 2004 issue: My top five for the year!

1. Josée *Lost Souls Dancing* (Inertia) No album had more repeat plays for me than this Dutch-born British singer collaborating with Hefner's Lee Jones. Downtempo soul bliss.
2. *Midnite Seek Knowledge Before Vengeance* (African Roots Lab) Single-handedly brought back deep roots reggae; hypnotic two-hour live performances to boot.
3. Kaki King *Legs To Make Us Longer* (Epic) There's a reason a major signed this 23-year-old finger-picking guitarist—otherworldly instrumental songs that do gymnastics on concrete playgrounds.
4. Murcof *Utopia* (Leaf) Mexican orchestral soundtrack producer takes minimal techno in necessarily dark and spacious directions.
5. *Bombay Beats* (Water) I always need more fiery hip-hop bhangra in my life. Honorable mentions: !!!, Ulrich Schnauss, Crown City Rockers, *Forum West* and *Kompakt 100* comps. Thank you for your readership and support of our insane music habits. ¡Adiós!

-Tomas Palermo



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AZURE
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DJ Krush's eighth original album

DJ KRUSH

J a k u



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ON THE COVER: Matthew Dear by Serial Cut

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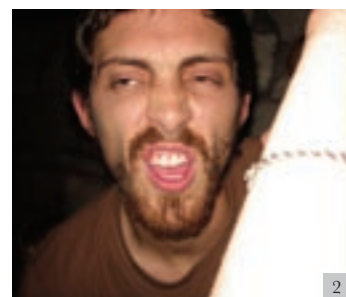
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Mireya Acierto works and works and works in NY. She will photograph just about anything you put in front of her and won't go away until she's got a story. Mireya has contributed to publications such as *Vibe*, *XLR8R*, *Neo2*, *Clam* and *Sirene*. Check out Society for Contemporary Photography (www.sconline.org), where you can view work from her most recent project, *Current Works 2004*.

2. DAVID CLARK

David Clark—alternatively known as Ponyboy and Faghat—is part of *XLR8R*'s production team; he lays out the reviews sections in *InDesign* and makes everything look real, real pretty and neat. Mr. Clark is a North Carolina native—by way of design school in Savannah, Georgia—and when he's not hounding people for graphics or pushing picas, he can be found driving a float in the SF Love Parade, killing the dancefloor at San Francisco's Sunset parties or throwing his trademark "Whatevvvah" sign high in the air.

3. SERIAL CUT

Twenty-six-year-old Serial Cut (alias Sergio del Puerto) lives in sunny Madrid, where he is obsessed with New Order, Almodóvar, Colder and David Lynch. Known for a cut & paste style that combines vector work, pencil sketches and photos, del Puerto is the art director of *Vanidad* magazine, co-founder of webzine/creative portal/studio Acrylick (www.acrylick.com), and, for the last three years, he's been contributing a weekly illustration to the sex section of Spain's leading newspaper, *El País*. Basically, he's on fire.

4. TAMARA WARREN

Tamara Warren's articles about music, cars, design and culture have appeared in over 50 publications including *Time Out New York*, *Rides*, *BlackBook*, *Nylon*, *Rime*, *Anthem*, *YRB*, *Remix*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *Clear* and *The Ave*. She pens "Ladies' Choice," a column about women and cars on www.automotiverhythms.com. A Detroit expat—now living in Brooklyn—Tamara is the former electronic music editor of *Venus*, drawing from her industry knowledge as marketing manager for 430 West and Direct Beat Records in the late '90s. She's currently working on a book and a film about her grandfather, a 94-year-old Holocaust survivor. Check her out at www.tamarawarren.com.

IT WAS A GREAT GAME, IT WAS A GREAT TEST.
THE TWO HOCKEY TEAMS CLASHED, THE SPECTATORS WERE BLESSED.
THERE WERE CUTS, AND SCRAPES AND A FEW BROKEN SKULLS.
EACH TEAM HAD CONCUSSIONS AND THERE WERE ONLY 3 GOALS.
AND THEN CAME THE SLAPSHOT FROM BIG MARTY THE TRUCK,
THAT HIT TOMMY, IN NET, AND HE SWALLOWED THE PUCK.



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WORDSOUND SOUNDS OFF

Just wanted to inform you about a glaring error in your current issue (#82). There was an article about Sound-Ink in which the writer spoke of the “disappearance of WordSound.” If she had bothered to check our site she would have seen that we have been steadily releasing stuff (including five records this year), but your magazine fails to do so much as review anything. I know I personally sent you releases by Crooklyn Dub Vol. 4, Philosophy Major, Teledubgnosis, Weapons of Mass Destruction and the *WS50 DVD* (that I heard you are reviewing), but for some

reason we do not even merit a review (while these releases have arguably been our best in 10 years of operation).

As you know, the whole distribution game is changing. After being stiffed by Caroline in 2001 to the tune of \$38,000 we held on, despite great hardship, to put out more records. This past year, our European distro, EFA (the biggest independent), went down owing us some \$80,000. With losses like that one can understand why our visibility in the marketplace has been severely affected, but yet we have maintained to release our 50th album, *WS50: The Video Album* (DVD).

It’s tough enough running a true independent label from your living room for the last 10 years single-handedly, but when you get ignorant and misinformed journalists telling people the label has gone AWOL, it doesn’t help much—especially when the same magazine refuses to cover any of your music or artists.

C’mon, man, don’t dumb out like the Bush administration. Were here, we’ve been here for the last 10 years, so give us our due respect.
Skiz

Jesse Serwer responds:

If something isn’t visible, it’s safe to say that it has “disappeared.” As a music writer whose main interest is experimental hip-hop, who owns a good deal of the records in the Wordsound catalog and visits the Wordsound site periodically, the label appeared to have “disappeared” at the time I wrote this piece. I do my homework before every story I write, and I’d been trying to find out if Wordsound still existed for my own interest. I couldn’t find any current contact info online, so I asked several people I know who’ve had material

released on the label, and they also thought the label had gone AWOL. At the time I wrote it, the Wordsound webpage did not appear to have been updated in quite some time. I didn’t say the label “went under” or “failed;” if I had, I could understand such objection to the use of a single word as subjective as “disappearance.” The irony is I was actually paying Wordsound a compliment, by suggesting that it’s disappearance would create a void, albeit one potentially filled by the excellent labels profiled in the story. The fact is that I’m a fan who is glad to see that the label still exists. You may also want to note that Jesse is a man’s name, and not a “she” as you indicated.
Jesse Serwer

NEW TECHNICS

I just wanted to send a little thank you note for the SL-DZ1200 I won from the Technics contest. It’s way bad ass and I can’t wait to start using it! Now I have even more motivation to keep up my mixing and scratching!
Rebecca Votel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to letters@xlr8r.com or send mail to XLR8R Magazine 1388 Haight Street #105 San Francisco, CA 94117. All letters printed “as is.”



HOLIDAY GIFT TOP 10

That’s it people. Do not send Bitter Bastard wrapping paper with Mac’s new optical mouse on it. Do not send trucker hats, bad candy with your company logo or silly cards with ice skating penguins on them. Bitter Bastard’s non-denominational holiday policy—which encompasses Kwanzaa, Hanukkah and Christmas—merely states that the following holiday gifts are to be received, care of Bitter Bastard at XLR8R, and borne in a velveteen sack by the lead singer of Les Savy Fav dressed as Santa. Is that too much to ask? I didn’t think so.

1. Liver transplant
2. A decent motherf**cking server
3. Voodoo dolls
4. A tan that doesn’t come from a machine
5. A Jamie Lidell calendar
6. A gallon jug of Febreze
7. Chihuahuas for the whole office
8. A joint Maker’s Mark/Red Stripe sponsorship
9. A dildo from Beans’ bag of tricks
10. Taqueria Cancun burritos FedExed to the entire New York office



PHOTO: Diamond Girl

TOTALLY WARPED ART

In issue #80, we gave away X-Large gear and Warp Records DVDs to 10 lucky winners who illustrated their favorite Warp artists. Here is a selection of some of the portraits we received from fans:



**XLR8R’S “BAG THIS” CONTEST
WIN SLAMMIN’ STUFF FROM ESPN
VIDEOGAMES AND UBIQUITY**

ESPN Videogames creates the most realistic sports games around, and they’ve just launched the hottest basketball title yet. *ESPN NBA 2K5*, the fifth installment of the wildly popular series, has been updated with a new momentum-based system called The Next Movement, which offers a realistic difference in character control based on players’ real-life attributes. Detroit Pistons’ Ben Wallace is the star here, but so is the music, which comes from such hot names as Madlib, Aceyalone and Del tha Funkee Homosapien (who has a cameo in the game). You can find the music by itself on an ESPN’s CD *Bouncing Beats*.

Speaking of bouncing beats, we’re also giving away some storming stuff from **Ubiquity**, whose new releases—from Chicago house legend Roy Davis Jr., tech soul producer As One and SA-RA Creative Partners, among others—show that the California-based label hasn’t slowed down on the tastemaking tip, even after over 14 years in the game. To celebrate Ubiquity’s ever-expanding roster of soul jazz, Afro-Cuban, and new school beats and breaks, we’re giving away their road-tested DJ bags and a collection of new music.

To win, answer these questions correctly. Winners will be drawn at random from the correct responses.

1. Who is on the cover of ESPN Videogames’ new title, *NBA 2K5*?
2. What is the name of the record store opened by Ubiquity’s founders in 1990 and what is its address?

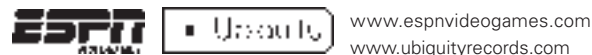


One Grand Prize Winner will receive a Ubiquity record bag filled with all five videogames in the *ESPN NBA* series, ESPN’s *Bouncing Beats* CD and a Ubiquity t-shirt.

One First Prize Winner will receive a Ubiquity record bag filled with new CDs and 12” vinyl from Roy Davis Jr., As One, SA-RA Creative Partners, and Platinum Pied Pipers and an *ESPN Bouncing Beats* CD.

Eighteen Runners-Up will receive an *ESPN Bouncing Beats* CD, with music from Abstract Rude, Lyrics Born and Madlib.

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Send your answers to XLR8R’s “Bag This!” contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email them to contest@xlr8r.com. Include your name, return address and email address when you enter. Entries must be received by December 31, 2004.



1. Prefuse 73 by El Chavo;
2. Vincent Gallo by Brad Hebebrand;
3. Squarepusher by Paul Same;
4. Autechre by Albert Elmore;
5. Rebus by Galina Kurkova;
6. Aphex Twin by Taylor Cathala;
7. Nightmares on Wax by Israel Gonzalez



Original Still



kaskade





TUSSLE
 DUB-LOVING DISCO PRANKSTERS HIT
 YOU WITH THEIR RHYTHM STICKS.
 WORDS: VIVIAN HOST PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER WOODCOCK

The noun “tussle” may mean to struggle roughly, but the band known as Tussle creates a tug-of-war that’s quite a bit more playful. On their debut album, *Kling Klang* (Troubleman Unltd.), plucky, loping bass coozies up to crisp, snare-heavy post-punk drums then pulls away coyly, as dub echoes wink at sharp handclaps and spar with twinkling quasar sounds. The instruments have to do all the talking in this equation since Tussle is, at least for now, an entirely instrumental band. Members Jonathan Holland, Nathan Burazer, Alexis Georgopolous and Andy Cabic (also in folk outfit Vetiver) trade off working melodica, percussion, bass and two sets of drums, a standard kit plus a second set-up that includes found plastic and metal objects.

Eschewing vocals was a complicated decision to make, says Georgopolous, the foursome’s most loquacious member (who also happens to be a cab driver and an *XLR8R* scribe). “Initially, we thought it would be interesting to play with hierarchy—to break down the typical band stratification that goes: vocalist number one, guitarist number two and rhythm section in the background,” he explains. “But a lot of people want a focal point when they see us live, so the idea is that the second record will be half guest vocalists and half instrumental.”

It’s a testament to Tussle’s fervor that—only a month after the release of their debut—they’re already working on their second record, not to mention a remix album (due in spring 2005) slated to feature collaborations with friends and idols including Soft Pink Truth, Munk, Zongamin, Broker/Dealer and The Boredoms. Truly, these San Francisco dwellers are rhythm fiends, and they’ve gleaned enough influence from ’60s Cambodian music to bhangra to batucada to minimal techno to create a legion of propulsive records. But Tussle doesn’t quite wear these influences on their sleeves; their tracks are more likely

to sound like an obscure Liquid Liquid outtake or a disco band covering Joy Division than out-and-out exotic dance beats.

One of the things linking together this disparate disco ball stew is a loose-limbed quality that Georgopolous says stems naturally from their shambolic environs. “We all live in [San Francisco’s Mission district], and I think we wanted to represent where we live in some way,” he muses. “We have a sort of ramshackle, chaotic, ceaseless quality. The Mission sort of never sleeps—people are scoring crack at three in the morning—and we live in the center of all that activity.”

It is fitting that Tussle is at its best playing at house parties—places where watching bands and dancing aren’t at odds with each other and a keg is always close at hand. For, despite Tussle being a troupe of obscure record collectors, they still love nothing more than a good get-down. “Our music is not necessarily cerebral,” reminds Georgopolous, “but it’s not just dance music either. There’s no need for dance music to be anti-intellectual. Your head and your ass are in the same body and they don’t need to be mutually exclusive.”

Kling Klang is out now on Troubleman Unlimited, as are remixes of “Eye Contact” (Troubleman) and “Disco D’Oro” (Rong). www.tussle.org

ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD

BREAKING FREE FROM THE TRIBE, THIS DJ/PRODUCER BEARS VERBAL WITNESS.

WORDS: DEREK BERES PHOTO: BRIAN TAMBORELLA



The opening image of Ali Shaheed Muhammad's website depicts the former A Tribe Called Quest and Lucy Pearl DJ hunched forward in prayer, sitting cross-legged on a long beach of red-brown sand. He is most likely facing Mecca, given his public devotion to Islam and the full-length of his middle name, Shaheedullah, meaning "witness of God."

After numerous accolades for his hard-hitting production work, Muhammad's debut makes it clear that he has something to express verbally. "*Shaheedullah & Stereotypes* is the first phase of a bigger musical journey," he assures, noting that his recent influences include Malian *n'goni* player Issa Bagayogo, Radiohead, Basement Jaxx and Coldplay. You're not going to hear rock guitars or African harmonics here, though. The record is a smooth mix that moves quickly, sensuously, seriously. It's uplifting, maintaining a head-nodding hip swing. "I wanted to shatter the conception that I was just a DJ or that I only make a jazzy brand of music," he states.

Mr. Muhammad has no problem shattering preconceived notions. On this record, he cuts songs that update Tribe's golden age ("Bonita Applebaum," "Can I Kick It?") for a new decade, and with a new frame of mind. And he's no slouch as an MC, either, coming alive on the bouncing, punctuated "Industry/Life" and "Tight," a verbally dexterous track deserving its namesake. Throughout he lays low, hat tipped and pocket watch flipping through wily fingertips, until it's time to strike with uncanny cadences.

Lying somewhere between rap and soul, Muhammad's production resume is top-class: Maxwell, Mos Def, D'Angelo, Angie Stone, Faith Evans and Janet Jackson are among the satisfied customers. On *Shaheedullah & Stereotypes*, the roster remains impressive, with Muhammad giving props to artists on his own Garden Seeker label. Chip Fu (formerly of Fu-Schnickens) pumps out quick-witted aphorisms on "Lord Can I Have Mercy" and Mint Condition's Stokley Williams tethers the record's finest cut, "Put Me On." Throughout, the Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn native swerves through beats meticulously crafted from minimal elements.

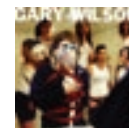
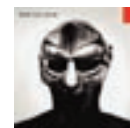
"I am Muslim and my beliefs were sure to manifest here. I just didn't want to come off too radical," Muhammad says, having found a way to explore spirituality without weighing down the music with preachy overtones. And in an ever-frantic industry schizophrenically seeking out new fixes and quick-cashed elixirs, there's nothing deeper than that. "I'm seeking the gardens of heaven and I can't get there leaving a legacy of B.S. in my music," he avows.

www.alishaheed.com, www.gardenseekerproductions.com



DVD+CD

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The words "guitar tech" conjure the image of a rail-thin, rat-tailed roadie standing off stage at a Megadeth show, waiting to hand a freshly-tuned axe to a flailing band member. But for Columbus, Ohio native Geoff White, guitar tech has a whole different meaning. The ambient, glitch and techno producer, who has recorded for Force Inc, Cytrax and Morris Audio, has advanced his intricate digital sounds to include an instrument he discovered in high school: classical acoustic guitar.

GEOFF WHITE

AN OHIO BOY IN BARCELONA MAKES MINIMAL TECHNO ROCK.

WORDS: TOMAS PALERMO

The change in White's sound came while working on his third full-length recording, *Viscous Solid*, under the alias Aeroc. The avid skateboarder (who hit the local skate park in Montreal before his live appearance at this year's Mutek festival) and recent Barcelona transplant created an entire record of textured electronic melodies from the processed sounds of guitars. Every clicky beat, bowed-string drone, plucked harmony and arcing sonic spark emanated from White's guitar arsenal, but the resulting music sounds nothing like a six-stringed instrument. The computer-processed compositions resemble a happy meeting between Fennesz, Pole and Jim O'Rourke.

White's guitar obsession dates back to his boredom-filled high school days in Ohio. "I found an old classical guitar buried in the closet of our house," White recalls between gulps of soda at one of Montreal's outdoor cafes. "I couldn't believe that I found it there. I was like, 'Mom, how come you didn't tell me about this?'" Once he picked it up, everything fell into place. "Classical guitars are still my favorite. Every step of the way [learning how to play] is so satisfying. You can suck, and while you're learning, you're having the greatest time."

He didn't suck for long, but studying graphic design at Ohio State did, so he left college and began making music and doing his own freelance

design work. Fellow Columbus techno producer and DJ Todd Sines played one of White's demo CDs while driving around a touring Joshua "Kit" Clayton, who later signed some tracks to his and John Mendez's Cytrax label. From there word spread to Germany's Force Inc imprint and White was tapped to produce 2001's *Questions And Comments* and 2003's split album with Stewart Walker, *Dischord*.

White's music as Aeroc is as esoteric as the name itself. "You can pronounce it any way you want," he says of the new I.D. he has hatched. "It's whatever people want to think about it." But despite Aeroc's amorphous meanings, the music is grounded in concrete musicianship. "I had six guitars at the time, and I used [*Viscous Solid*] as an excuse to buy four more!" quips White, adding, "It was more interesting to give myself a creative constriction. I like to make it sound like there's only one or two guitars [on a track], but [often] there's up to 100 at a time."

www.ghostly.com

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For a moment, put aside the sheer thrill of having a shoe named the “Emu Hijacker” on your fine little foot. This number from indie SF cobblers JB Classics combines *Back To the Future*-style Velcro tech and old school Airmax styling with ankle-breather cut-outs, then rockets the whole thing into outer space with an *Out of Africa* theme and silky brown colorway. These shoes give you all the ruggedness of Crocodile Dundee, while the emus scream that you’re not averse to some sensitive mackin’. Get ‘em quick—they’re limited to 1,008 pairs worldwide. www.jb-classics.com, www.suite2206.com

2. Reese Forbes Nike SB Hunter Dunk (\$70)

They’re a little bit country, they’re a little bit rock ‘n’ roll. Delphi Collective bucks tradition with their take on the Nike Dunk, giving it big stitches, brown/orange detailing, and plenty of burlap that adds up to an urban scarecrow feel. But don’t get out the banjo quite yet—the quilted orange satin interior will make your foot feel like it’s in its own personal limousine. www.delphicollective.com

3. DC Chalet (\$125)

At the moment, Virgin’s Richard Branson is accepting money from average people (not astronauts) to fly them into space. But who wants to go to space? It’s like, sooo far and stuff, and they don’t even have triple-shot caramel macchiatos there. It would be way better to just put on these shearling-lined moon boots, hop in a snow bank and pretend you’re the hybrid love child of Paris Hilton and Barbarella. www.deshoes.com

4. Gravis Blackbox Comet Mid (\$65)

Wearing gold jewelry is hella passé. What is incredibly cool, though, is wearing a touch of gold on your shoes. These ankle-huggers from Gravis’ high-end Blackbox line are the kind of thing you put on when you take your girl to the museum. White emboss, gold trim and one gold lace on the top ensure that she’ll spend more time staring at your feet and wondering what’s in your pants than pondering them Picassos. www.gravis.com

5. Saucony Courageous Floor Lords (\$68)

Sauconys have a tendency to appeal to 6 a.m. mall speed-walkers and people who like to flex their senior discount, but this time around the company has hooked up with legendary breakdancers the Floorlords. Don’t let the somewhat stacked heel and aggressive, robot-like look scare you—these shoes look cute on a foot, especially when that foot belongs to a 19-year-old Puerto Rican breakdancer with hot abs. Also, they’re comfortable as hell. www.saucony.com, www.floorlords.com

6. WE & Adidas High-tops (\$tba)

The only thing better than doing The Smurf is doing it in these shoes. A collaboration between sneaker giants Adidas and high-concept Swedish streetwear outpost WE, these electric numbers give new meaning to the song “Blue Suede Shoes.” Of course, if you’re rocking these high-tops you’ll want something that makes them a little more special than they already are, and that’s where the festive heel detailing—an orange crayfish pattern—and the embossed “We Are The Superlative Conspiracy” text on the side comes in. www.weclothing.com

7. Onitsuka Tiger Target Archery (\$75)

I’m turning Japanese, I think I’m turning Japanese, I really think so. At least, I think so whenever I look at these shoes. Their softly marbled and cracked exterior reminds me of the quiet, reedy rush of a DJ Krush song, while the golf tongue sends me into reveries about Tokyo businessmen stepping off the golf course and into the brothel. A mini-Japanese flag on the heel and the Asics stripes complete this roundhouse kick. Ouch! www.onitsukatiger.com





TOMLAB

GERMANY'S MOST HEARTFELT LABEL IS TOM STEINLE'S LABOR(ATORY) OF LOVE.
WORDS: MARK PYTLIK ILLUSTRATION: MAXIMILIAN BODE

If you add up the hours, they'd show that some of us have pledged whole days, maybe even entire weeks of our lives, to making mixed tapes. Cologne's Tom Steinle, on the other hand, wouldn't even have to do the math—as the founder of the Tomlab label, he's spent the better part of seven years handcrafting a catalog that reads like an extended series of C90s.

Founded in 1997, Tomlab began out of necessity, as a sort of homemade CD-R factory hatched among pals. "I was close friends with Jorg Fullert of Wechsel Garland and Jens Massel, who was doing Kandis' stuff for [label] Karaoke Kalk," Steinle recalls over the phone from his apartment-cum-office space. "We very spontaneously came together and decided to do a short tribute album to Talk Talk based on samples from [their album] *Laughing Stock*." Released that winter on the freshly formed Tomlab, the seven-track *Visor* foretold a catalog comprised of the same evocative, left-of-center turns that defined Talk Talk's output.

With just under 40 releases in seven years, Tomlab enjoys a well-deserved reputation as a carefully curated labor of love. It's Steinle's distinctly per-

sonal touch that makes the difference; where most boutique labels are content to specialize in a specific subset of music, he prefers a more fluid, meandering approach to artist selection. The roster contains everyone from emo synthster Casiotone For The Painfully Alone and folk-electronic act The Books to Japanese songstress Tujiko Noriko and elegant indie pop band Xiu Xiu. "[He's] absolutely not stuck to any particular 'style' or following any trend," says The Books' Nick Zammuto. "It's more like a map of Tom's personal taste, which makes it a very warm, intimate, artful and completely self-styled catalog."

"[His] releases are linked by a sensibility that has little to do with genre or trend," concurs Casiotone's Owen Ashworth. "There's a sincerity and intelligence at work that few other labels seem to have a grasp on." This means, of course, that the modest imprint is a bit of a slippery eel; where Tomlab originally rooted itself in the bubblegum bloop of Germany's burgeoning electro-pop set, it's no longer all that concerned with electronic music.

Steinle, whose current crushes tend to carry guitars, admits "the direction is going somewhere different." Aside from a full-length follow-up from Irish folk noisenik Patrick Wolf in February and new material from The Books in the spring, Steinle's got no clear agenda for next year's release schedule. Given his penchant for change, he's wise to keep his options open. After all, it was a similar mobility that allowed him to snap up The Books on a whim back in 2001. As Zammuto puts it, it was a classic case of "right time, right place, right Tom."

www.tomlab.de

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PLATINUM PIED PIPERS

DETROIT NATIVES SPREAD
THE NEW SOUL GOSPEL,
ONE NOTE AT A TIME.

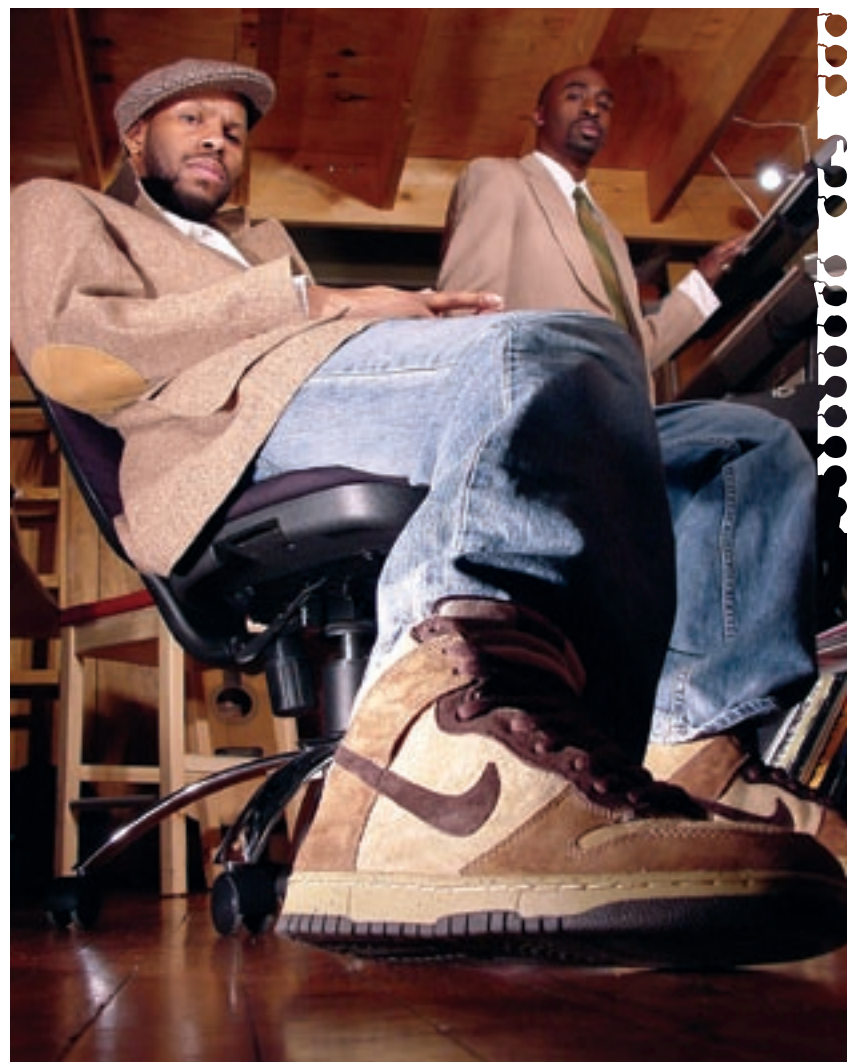
WORDS: TAMARA WARREN
PHOTO: MARIO BUTTERFIELD

"[It's] pretty much an easy marriage, if I can call it that," says Saadiq of his partnership with Waajeed under the name Platinum Pied Pipers. "[Waajeed is] on the MPC and I'm on the chords. We just put it together and sprinkle it with different elements."

Indeed, the pair has enough magic in their fingertips to make the Keebler elves cry. Their debut album, *PPP* (Ubiquity), is rich with hip-hop-infused neo-soul burners that traverse the musical spectrum, with solid, classic song structures and splashy guest vocalists, including producer/MC Jay Dee, UK singer Steve Spacek and Detroit MC Lacks. Their first single, "Stay With Me," featuring silky R&B notes from Tiombe Lockhart, is a modern update on a classic formula. "'Stay With Me' is basically like a 'don't leave me' song," Waajeed says. "It was ironic to take a typical 'don't go baby' R&B track and turn it into something that's house, R&B and hip-hop."

It's natural to hear traces of the duo's pedigree in their tracks. Waajeed is a founding member of Slum Village, creator of hip-hop label Bling47, an accomplished visual artist and a craftsman for Nickelodeon's adult cartoon hour *Adult Swim*. Saadiq started off as a street dancer who could still give most b-boys a run for their money; a multi-instrumentalist, he honed his studio skills working on funk numbers with Motown producer Barrett Strong.

The longtime friends—both Detroit natives—first



made waves as a pair in 2002 with a version of Bobby Caldwell's "Rydin High" that featured soul sensation Dwele. Their penchant for clever covers continues on *PPP*, with Raheim channeling Paul Simon's "50 Ways," and the sultry Georgia singing Lenny Kravitz's "Flowers for Zoë." Georgia also turns up on "The Day is Done," a collision of big band sounds with early disco rhythms.

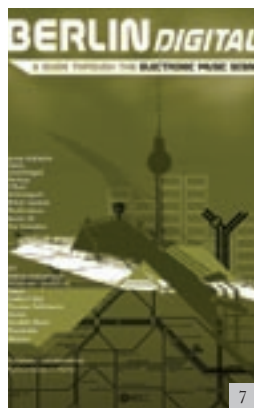
PPP has a knack for witty dance jams, but likes to take it deep as well; notably, they try to remain in the moment for each track. "Sometimes you do a track," says Saadiq, "and when you hear the track it tells you what the song [lyrics are] going to be about." A just-penned jam with female MC Invincible ("Detroit Winter"), for instance, strikes an extended metaphor between life and the tough Midwestern winters. "In Detroit, we're surrounded by winter and it's hella cold," explains Waajeed. "The song talks about how you have to get through the winter and the rough part of life before you get to the summer."

"I'm inspired by what happens immediately," Waajeed continues. "If something falls on my foot and my foot is hurting I might name the track 'My Foot is Hurting.' I can be a sponge and reflect that moment."

Platinum Pied Pipers' "Stay With Me" 12" is out now. *PPP* will be out on Ubiquity in February 2005.

www.ubiquityrecords.com

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1. Madvillain (Stonesthrow);
2. Jamie Lidell (Lieblingslied);
3. Dudley Perkins (Stones Throw);
4. Ellen Allien (Lieblingslied);
5. Stonesthrow;
6. Wordsound;
7. Berlin Digital

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SET IN STONE

In honor of their 101st release, Stones Throw drops *Stones Throw 101* (Stones Throw; \$20), a dope DVD/mix-CD package filled with classics from the label and a few unheard/seen goodies. As you would expect, the videos are all over the place, from weird alien puppets (Quasimoto's "Come On Feet") to a simply awesome comic book-style Madvillain clip. The skinny on the mix CD: over 40 tracks, 70 minutes, mixed by Peanut Butter Wolf, and no bullshit involved—strictly creative hip-hop that's not afraid to take risks. Congrats to the crew on skipping the stone this far—we're looking forward to the next 100. *Jesse Terry*

www.stonesthrow.com

WORD UP

In 1994, Harvard classmates Skiz Fernando and Jeremy Dawson started Wordsound Records in their Williamsburg loft, and eventually released 50 records of fine experimental dub and hip-hop by such artists as Anti-Pop Consortium, Rob Swift, Sensational and MC Paul Barman. Wordsound recently marked its 10-year run with a collection of videos and interviews entitled *WS50: The Video Album* (Wordsound; \$15). The highlight of the DVD is *The Greatest Thing You Never Heard*, a 74-minute documentary narrated by Fernando. Featuring interviews with Wordsound associates Bill Laswell, Prince Paul and engineer Scotty Hard, the film is a testament to the legacy of Wordsound and a fascinating look at the history of one of Crooklyn's most influential labels. *DJ Anna*

www.wordsound.com

DEUTSCH MARKED

With over 70 hours of footage to compile, distributor EFA asked the production team of Holger Wick and Maren Sextro to create an 80- to 90-minute documentary on clublife in Germany's capital. Instead, the *Berlin Digital* DVD (Lieblingslied Records; \$20.50) clocks in at two hours and 15 minutes, and it may just save you the Lufthansa airfare. This un-touristy travelogue (in English and German) takes you to underground clubs, record stores/promotion teams and inside private meetings with some of the metropolis's most cutting edge label-heads. Using the Metro map as a guide, visit both East and West Berlin through 21 shorts (with !K7's Horst Wiedenmuller, Ellen Allien, Bomb 20, Thomas Fehlmann, Jamie Liddell) and learn why the Krauts rule electronic music. *Daniel Siwek*

www.lieblingslied-records.de

**NEXT BIG THING:
INVINCIBLE**

Wherever Invincible treads, she rips rhymes with furious diction and thought provoking poetics. "To me, it's about bringing my personal perspective and flowing rhyme-wise," she says. Her lyrical ripples run deep—whether kicking it with the all-female Anomalies hip-hop crew, rocking joints on 1999's *Hip Hop for Respect* and 2003's *Detroit Experiment* albums or writing dialogue for MTV's *Lyricist Lounge*.

Invincible claims Detroit and New York as home, but she spent her early childhood in Israel. "Hip-hop was one of the ways I learned English so fast," she says. "I found it to be the most effective way to express myself." Since then, Invincible has made sure that her words matter. She often appears on benefit compilations and rhymes about community involvement, and she's not all talk, either—she's currently developing a media center for

children through the Detroit Summer Youth program.

You can find Invincible's latest lyrics on *Justice Now*, a benefit album for incarcerated women in California, the new Platinum Pied Pipers' album (*Ubiquity*) and on *Dirty District Vol. 2* (Barak). Her long awaited album is due out next summer, but she's giving her growing fan base a nibble with the mixtape *Last Warning*, available at www.bling47.com. *Tamara Warren*



**OBSESSIONS:
BUCK 65**



Buck 65 (alias Richard Terfrey) often raps like a flop-house hotel tenant drying his socks on a heater, his beats and samples scavenged from the junkyard and piled on his bed. The underground hip-hop artist has stamped many impressions with his Bukowski-esque narratives and ramshackle productions. His latest joint, *This Right Here is Buck 65* (V2), will be out in January. Terfrey has many fascinations, among them found-object art, Sasquatch and French culture. But after we talked about David Lynch's search for the perfect milkshake during the writing of *Blue Velvet*, Terfrey expounded on a particular obsession he has with the creamy white stuff...vanilla shakes, that is. *Cameron Macdonald*

www.buck65.com, www.v2music.com

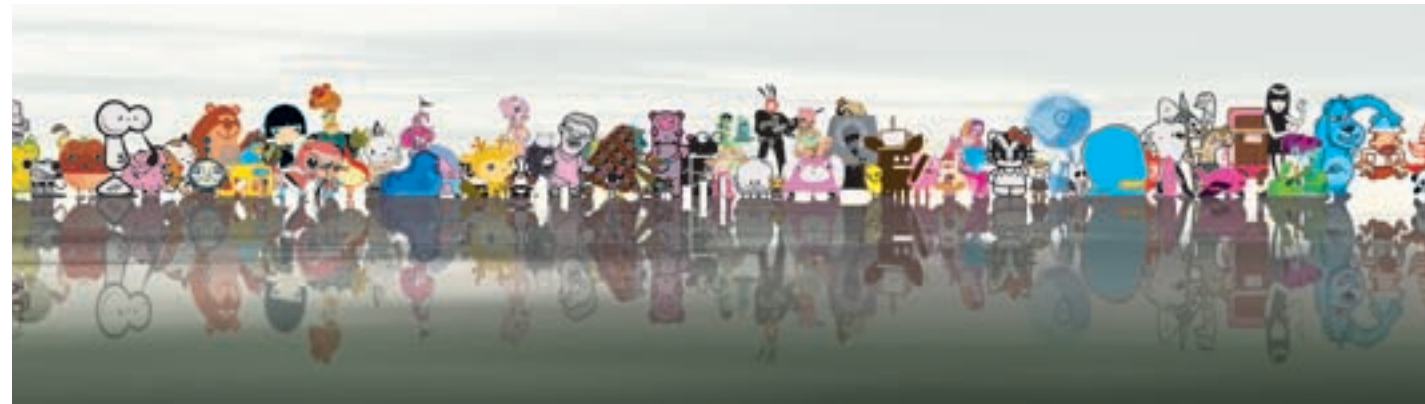
BUCK 65 ON MILKSHAKES

"The really interesting thing about [searching for the perfect milkshake]—and you can take this as a metaphor for a lot of things, and life in general—is that, in my experience, you are most pleasantly surprised in places that you least expect. In New York on St. Marks Street there's the 'Old-Fashioned New York Milkshake Company,' and you think, 'Oh boy, I think I'll go in!' And then you go in and you pay 10 bucks for a shake and it's not all that hot. [One of the] best milkshakes I've had—and this has really been a lifelong pursuit—was at a Burger King in Auckland, New Zealand. The other, where I consistently go to get my milkshakes on a daily basis, are those Mr. Softie trucks in New York. The quest continues, of course. There is a real mystery about a shake. It seems simple. I mean, how many ingredients can you put in there? But there's some kind of magic. I gotta say that technique has a lot to do with it. Consistency is a factor for me. I like it thick, but it can't be too thick that your brain implodes when you try to drink it."

CREATURE FEATURE

Character mania reached its apex on October 28-30 in East Berlin, as Mumbleboy, Friends With You, Derrick Hodgson, Boris Hoppek (shown at right), Miss Van, Buro Destruct and Neasden Control Centre (among many others) touched down for Pictoplasma, the first annual conference on contemporary character design and art. Accompanying the exhibition at Zentralbuero was a life-size battle installation called *Characters At War*, which pitted more than 100 of the underground world's most recognizable characters against one another. Dalek monsters duked it out with Hello Kitty, Emily the Strange went up against the Toy2R army, and Mari-Chan's already-maimed cartoon pets gave Nathan Jurevicius' Scarygirl icon a run for her money. War has never looked so cute. *Vivian Host*

www.pictoplasma.com/war



GENERATING X

"Creativity Now" was the hefty mandate set forth by Tokion's annual conference of the same name (held October 2 and 3 at NY's Cooper-Union School of Art), and the magazine trotted out the heavyweights of art, music, film, photography, design and political marketing for two days of intense musing on what propels them to create. Inspirations included the unflagging passion of documentary photographers **Nan Goldin** and **Bruce Davidson** and an Art Into Rock panel that sparked lively discussion between the ever-blasé **Kim Gordon** and The Boredoms' **Eye Yamataka**, punctuated by clever aphorisms from strangely giggly art provocateur **Rita Ackermann**.

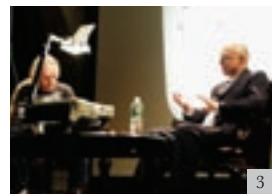
A witty **Brian Eno** bucked perceptions of sound artists as dour academics, holding the audience rapt as he discussed the links between his music and visual art, his fascination with building machines that would produce endless pieces of music, and the use of sound to create a sense of location. Additional buzz was created by eccentric cinematographer **Christopher Doyle**, avant-garde Japanese art director **Nagi Noda** and Bomb Squad producer **Hank Shocklee** (of Public



Enemy fame), whose kinetic energy drove a current of excitement throughout the crowd.

Even a rambling, incoherent lecture by rogue illustrator Raymond Pettibon and weak moderators (particularly pompous cultural critic/Paper Magazine editor Carlo McCormick and his barrage of long-winded questions) couldn't spoil the overall intensity of Creativity Now. The weekend's message was perhaps summed up best by a comment from erudite techno producer **Carl Craig**. "You can't achieve perfection [in art]," he said. "The only perfection is getting across what you're trying to get across." *Tyra Bangs*

www.tokion.com



1. Creativity Now crowd;
2. Raymond Pettibon;
3. Brian Eno



DJ SASHA

CODEK'S HEAD HONCHO ISN'T AFRAID TO GET FLAGRANT.

WORDS: TOMAS PALERMO ILLUSTRATION: TROPHY

Remember this, aspiring artists: bad press can be a plus. Take it from Codek Records DJ Sasha Crnobrnja (a.k.a. Cosmic Rocker, In Flagranti). The 38-year-old Brooklyn (by way of the former Yugoslavia) stalwart took a negative review of one of his singles and turned it into a successful weekly party.

"We released a 12" by Brotherman Tell," he explains. "The A-side is the track 'Golden Bucky' and the B-side is a track called 'Aged.' I personally love this record. Some guy did a review and he really did not get it. He totally dissed the A-side track and then wrote 'the track 'Aged' is absolutely unplayable.'" After a good laugh with Alex Gloor, Crnobrnja's artistic partner at Codek, the pair decided the critic gave them the perfect name for a new party, and Aged & Unplayable was born. "Plus, it fit perfectly in to the concept for In Flagranti," Crnobrnja adds, "taking old songs that people don't really play and re-editing them into new tracks."

A cut-and-paste aesthetic has informed much of Crnobrnja's recorded work, which includes

thick-thighed afro-funk and Kingston circa-'78-friendly club-dub jams. The Cosmic one's discography and remix work spans labels from the UK's Nation, Outcast and Mainsqueeze and Germany's Select Cuts to France's Tigersushi and America's Six Degrees—with Crnobrnja repeatedly showcasing his left-leaning and off-kilter blend of "dub-disco-broken-no-wave-lectronica."

His 20 years of DJing and 10 years of recording have earned Crnobrnja a favored place in New York, a city in which he's "never felt like a foreigner." While he's got a major addiction to drums and percussion, lately he's been spinning samples through ReCycle and Reason. The end result? The In Flagranti bomb "Just Gazing" dropped on Tigersushi in June.

And it's hard to ignore that crazy alias of his. Is the name a "flagrant" reaction to New York's waning art scene?

"In Flagranti is a more conceptual project between me and Alex Gloor," he offers. "It's really just another outlet for our creations. We constantly pitch ideas at each other until it evolves into a solid track or project. We like to have our own identity and aesthetic, that's why we started [Codek] in the first place. It's not just about putting out tracks—it reflects on how we like to feel, hear and see things."

www.codek.com



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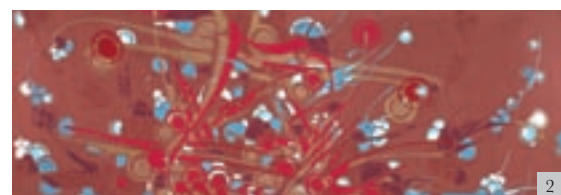
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4

**SPIN
CYCLE**
NEWS AND GOSSIP
FROM THE MUSIC
WORLD

In late September, early '90s flower-child hip-hop group **Digable Planets**—consisting of MCs **Butterfly**, **Doodlebug** and **Ladybug Mecca**—reunited. On October 30, **Rock Steady** celebrated the 20-year anniversary of *Beat Street* at The Point in the Bronx, with panels on b-boying and a breakdance battle. Dark pop band **Deerhoof** has released a free album via internet download. *Bibidi Babidi Boo* compiles various tracks performed live and is available at the new joint site between the Kill Rock Stars and 5 Rue Christine labels (www.krs5rc.com). **Trans Am** member **Sebastian Thomson** has a new band called **The Frequency**. Following a trademark infringement lawsuit from Handsome Dick Manitoba, lead singer of punk band **The Dictators**, Domino recording artist **Manitoba** has been forced to change his name to Caribou. He is currently working on an album tentatively called *The Milk of Human Kindness*. Be the next **Biz Markie** with *Foundations*, a new beatbox instructional DVD. For a preview and some preliminary lessons, check www.beatbox.tv. Nike is doing a limited edition shoe in honor of **De La Soul**, whose eighth album, *The Grind Date*, is out now. Brooklyn duo **Junk Science** (part of the Nuclear Family crew) recently won Scion's Nextup Emcee contest. And, in car news, graffiti artists including **Krush1**, **Retna** and **Mear** are among 56 artists who have customized Scion cars as part of their Installation art auction. **Ministry's** Al Jourgensen has created the soundtrack for Activision videogame *Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines*, which features scary numbers from **Lacuna Coil**, **Daniel Ash** and **Die My Darling**. **Dillinja** and **Lemon D's** drum & bass label **Valve** is developing a bevy of new art-

ists, among them Bristol's **TC**, South London's **Dan Miracle** and Newcastle natives **Craggz** and **Parallel Forces**. The Robonexus conference was held October 21-23 at California's Santa Clara Convention Center. The gathering unveils the latest in robotics technology. The Wishing Tree label recently launched two new labels, **Empyrean** (which will consist solely of vinyl reissues, including albums by **The Sunshine Fix** and **Super Furry Animals**) and **Earthling**, featuring singer-songwriters. **Alife** has released a new collaboration with **Frank151** and the **Wu-Tang Clan**, consisting of a book, t-shirt, an exclusive CD hosted by **RZA** and Dutch Masters blunts. **Fischerspooner** has an art space in (where else?) Williamsburg where they have been showcasing their new music and art. It's called **Excellent Workshop**. **Matador Records** celebrates 15 years this winter with a new three-disc compilation, *Matador at 15*. It includes a "Greatest Hits" disc, a CD of unreleased tracks and rarities and a DVD of music videos from the last five years. In September, **Maharishi** opened a new store in London's Soho. The five-floor emporium and gallery, called **dphmhi**, will showcase house publications, contemporary designer toys and plenty of the innovative camo the brand is known for. Check www.dphmhi.com. Breaks man **Meat Katie** and chill-out all-star **Pathaan** have just been added to the line-up at Ministry of Sound radio, which also features shows from **Bryan Gee**, **LTJ Bukem** and **Distinctive Records**. Hit www.ministryofsound.com. **Erasure**, **M83** and **Mando Diao** have new albums due on Mute Records in January and February. **Graffiti207** is a new pediatric clinic and art gallery in the Washington Heights area of New York. It is entirely designed and painted by graf writers, and children who visit the clinic will receive a graffiti-themed coloring book by **Cay161** and **Kez5**. Street beats online at www.pyrotechnicradio.com. Get inspired at www.pixelsurgeon.com. Check out new graphic design at www.servicio-ejecutivo.com. We out.

1. Deerhoof (Ben Clark); 2. and
3. Work from Retna and Krush at
Graffiti 207; 4. Maharishi t-shirt;
5. M83; 6. Al Jourgensen; 7. Digable
Planets;

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BEST ARTIST OF 2004: MATTHEW DEAR

His first album refined minimal techno's cold, glitchy atmosphere with a grittier, thicker *oomph*. His second record added subtle vocals to the mix. With each year Dear's live performances and recordings become stronger, and more unique. We have an American Richie Hawtin on our hands. *Derek Grey, XLR8R Magazine*

The Conor Oberst of the post-techno set, I'd be surprised if, given his excellent press coverage over the course of the past year, Dear didn't break commercially—either by signing to a major, or a very large indie. More power to him. *Joel Schalit, writer, member of Elders of Zion*

An electronic artist with a sound so captivating and addictive that it's always just what I'm in the mood for, no matter what mood I'm in. *Bela Canhoto, Native Instruments*

Matthew Dear is one of those rare producers that has come to a level of understanding of every detail and aspect of sound—just like a violin virtuoso that, after 25 years playing the instrument, suddenly becomes a part of it. Man and machine in perfect sync. *Håkan Lidbo, Container Music*

Words: Tomas Palermo Illustration: Serial Cut

Even though George Bush, Iraq and Paris Hilton dominated the American mindset for much of 2004, the savvy looked elsewhere for stimulation and enlightenment. Nowhere was this more evident than in our seriously revitalized and invigorated music community, in which people's desire to party and get on with it was matched by a fierce political awareness.

Music culture—and the art, design, clothing, videogames and media worlds that it interacts with—coughed up some mighty powerful odes to these tense times and beauty's ability to conquer fear. And who better to tell us what mattered most (and didn't) than those *XLR8R* fans and producers that live the culture as fiercely as our writers and readers? With a gaggle of surprising and sometimes contradictory opinions, these tastemakers captured the spirit of a year of debate, controversy and damn good music!

MUSIC

BEST ARTISTS OF 2004

TV ON THE RADIO Absolutely amazing. I saw one of the guys from the band walking down the street in Brooklyn and I squealed like a little schoolgirl. *Doug E. Smiley (DJ Shakeyface), director of marketing, Studio Distribution*

These guys definitely set themselves apart with a fresh sound. I can't remember getting this excited about a sound since I heard Bad Brains or Massive Attack. *Charlie Cooper, Telefon Tel Aviv*

GHOSTFACE Even though he lost the "Killah," he's still the best thing that Wu-Tang (and probably mainstream rap) have going at the moment. Colorful, maybe a little crazy, not afraid to do shows in his bathrobe and spit next-level, cryptic knowledge. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

With all the mind-numbing bullshit going on in commercial hip-hop, Ironman put out an honest album with old soul and new fury. Fuck iced-out medallions, the man wears a gold falcon on his arm. *Asif Mian, Evaq Studio*

QUANTIC Will Holland shows again and again that he can't stop/won't stop, and he's the hardest working man in music. *Aaron Schultz, Bastard Jazz Recordings*

FERNANDO CORONA (TERRESTE, MURCOF) Corona manages to effortlessly create a fun melodic dance party with Terreste while managing a serious classical effort with Murcof. *Howard Robot, My Robot Friend*

THE STREETS An act I was begging to hate from the very start, but now actually seems like an English prophet—accurate and emotional working-class story-telling. *Simon Halliday, Warp US*

DJ KRUSH While James Lavelle now plays progressive house and former UNKLE members are electroclash scenesters, out of the ashes of Mo' Wax rises Krush, who remains true to the underground and has raised his game to a whole new level. *Luke McKeenan, owner, Nordic Trax*

JAMIE LIDELL Jamie was the last performer at MUTEK this year and he bitch-slapped every jaw in the place straight to the floor. The bar has been raised for live performance. *Scott Monteith, Deadbeat*

JOHN TEJADA His work is incredible and he's so prolific I always get to hear something new and different. Plus, he's a sick techno DJ. *Jeff Taylor Cross, audio product marketing manager, Apple Computers*

TIEFSCHWARZ From their own productions to their remixes, Tiefschwarz has turned dance music on its ear by delivering fresh electronic sounds that not only push the envelope forward but don't deny the draw of the dancefloor. *Peter Wohelski, project manager, Studio Distribution*



WORST ARTISTS OF 2004

INTERPOL What's a derivative of a derivative called again? I struggled some in calculus... *Alex Threadgold, SOUND|iNK Records*

FATBOY SLIM Hasn't he retired yet? *Melissa Taylor, Fabric*

THE SHINS When the star of *Garden State* was quoted on the Sundance Channel as saying that The Shins are the Simon and Garfunkel of his generation, I finally knew why I disliked this overrated indie pop band so much. *Joel Schalit, writer, member of Elders of Zion*

MOVING UNITS Their formula (The Strokes + The Rapture) should really yield some catchy songs. Instead, the new album is so bloated with clichés it can't help but sink. *James Fucking Friedman, US label manager, Output Recordings*



BEST ALBUMS OF 2004

MADVILLAIN MADVILLAINY (STONES THROW) The best Madlib beats and the best Metal Faced verses ever. As prolific as both of them are, this is an example of how ill it can really get conceptually. I will never stop listening to this record. *Prefuse 73*

AIR TALKIE WALKIE (VIRGIN) This record is a masterpiece. *Joshua Eustis, Telefon Tel Aviv*

Lyrical conceptual, beautiful production and all the hooks needed to be a pop record. *Jeff Taylor Cross, audio product marketing manager, Apple Computers*

MOODYMANN BLACK MAHOGANI (PEACEFROG) The most emotional musician working today. All his records are just incredible; in time he will be revealed to the masses as the genius he is. *Simon Halliday, Warp US*

DIPLO FLORIDA (BIG DADA) No other album in recent memory has captured the microcosm of the diggin' scene and the ability to grow from it to create something new. *Peter Hahn, creative director, Turntable Lab/Money Studios*

PRINCE MUSICOLOGY (NPG MUSIC) Prince is back and he brought the funk! School is now in session so listen and learn. *DJ Bone, Subject Detroit*

THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE CONNECTED (BBE) Phonte of Little Brother hooks up with Nicolay, a producer from the Netherlands, via the Okayplayer message board. The two trade tracks and lay down vocals over Instant Messenger without ever physically meeting and they wind up creating the hip-hop album of the year. *Adam Kurzawa, director of music marketing, Giant Step*

COLDER AGAIN (OUTPUT) Love and Rockets meets Suicide with a hint of early New Order guitar work... seriously good. *Damon Way, exec VP of DC Shoes*

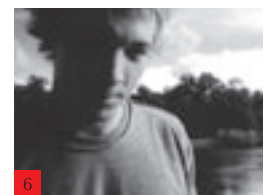
LYRICS BORN LATER THAT DAY (QUANNUM) Beats, rhymes, concept tracks; the album is dope from start to finish. *Peter Bittenbender, president, Decon*

808 STATE PREBUILD (REPHLEX) The rawness and energy of these tracks is staggering. Its radical invention bleeds humanity from the speaker with every 303 tweak in a way no megaprocessed 2004 laptop can touch. *Brian Paul, Mistakes Aloud*

BLOCKHEAD MUSIC BY CAVELIGHT (NINJA TUNE) Who'da think that Aesop Rock's producer would put out a record on Ninja Tune full of thick, emotive breaks and beautiful melody? Who'da think that Ninja Tune would have put out such an amazing record from an American? *Aaron Schultz, Bastard Jazz Recordings*

OTTO VON SCHIRACH GLOBAL SPEAKER FISTING (SCHEMATIC) Any album that has a song with French accordion mixed with death metal guitar has got to be great! *Billy Pollard, knifehandchop*

ROY DAVIS JR. CHICAGO FOREVER (UBIQUITY) Don't call it sexy, just put it on. *Luke McKeenan, owner, Nordic Trax*



JEAN GRAE'S 2004 NICKEL BAG O' FUNK

1. De La Soul *The Grind Date* (Sanctuary Union)
2. Jill Scott *Beautifully Human* (Hidden Beach)
3. The Roots *The Tipping Point* (Okay Player)
4. Ghostface *The Pretty Tony Album* (Def Jam)
5. MOP *Marxmen Cinema* (Breaking Point)



WORST ALBUMS OF 2004

BEASTIE BOYS TO THE 5 BOROUGHS (CAPITOL) I know, I know, I was as crushed as everybody else. Beasties, come on! I was there for you after *Hello Nasty* and this is what I get? *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

AIR TALKIE WALKIE (VIRGIN) I am sure there were much worse, but in terms of a band I used to like so much being reduced to such drivel...just pointless. I mean, even the title is daft. *Simon Halliday, Warp US*

FRANZ FERDINAND (DOMINO-SONY) If there was ever any indication that there's a new mass-marketed indie rock aesthetic being pimped by the majors, this extremely undistinguished recording would be it. *Joel Schalit, writer, member of Elders of Zion*

MODEST MOUSE GOOD NEWS FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE BAD NEWS (SONY) Bad news for people who love Modest Mouse. *John Martin, Vice Magazine*

THE TOP TEN GLOBAL BEATS RECORDINGS OF 2004

(Compiled by Derek Beres, Tomas Palermo and Vanka Van Ouytsel)

1. *Coolie Dance* (Greensleeves)
2. *State of Bengal vs Paban Das Baul-Tana Tani* (Real World)
3. *Mercan Dede-Sufi Traveler* (Doublemoon/Caroline)
4. *Club Sodade: Cesaria Evora By...* (Bluebird)
5. *Ojos De Brujo-Bari* (World Village)
6. *The Outernationalists: Ethnomixology* (Six Degrees)
7. *Salif Keita: Remixes From Moffou* (Emarcy)
8. *Twilight Circus-Foundation Rockers* (M)
9. *Bombay Beats* (Water Music)
10. *Zap Mama-Ancestry In Progress* (Luaka Bop)



BEST MUSIC LABELS OF 2004

STONES THROW They're the modern day Blue Note. *Peter Hahn, creative director, Turntable Lab/Money Studios*

Every few years you can buy based on a label alone—Def Jam, Sleeping Bag, Tommy Boy, Sub Pop, Mo'Wax, Cash Money. All of them had a period where you didn't even have to listen before throwing down loot. This year, it's been Stones Throw. *Bill McMullen (Billions McMillions), designer, SWISHNYC*

XL Together, Dizzee, Wiley and M.I.A. brought more innovation than the rest of the industry combined. Nuff said. *Alex Threadgold, SOUND|iNK Records*

TIGERBEAT6 When I thought of my favorite albums of the past few years, many of them seem to be compiled on Kid606's label. The overall quality—and desire to help young producers—really makes his label a standout. *Jason Forrest (a.k.a. Donna Summer)*

DOMINO They sold two million Franz Ferdinand records without changing their integrity one bit. *Tom Windish, The Windish Agency*

BIG DADA Big Dada showed this year how a great UK hip-hop label should be run. Great homegrown acts from the UK that break away from the norms of American hip-hop (Infinite Livez), underrated US acts that deserve more respect than they've gotten (Big Juss) and just plain universal dopeness (Diplo). *Aaron Schultz, Bastard Jazz Recordings*

OUTPUT Output proves excellence starts at the top. When you have someone like Trevor Jackson making aesthetic-based decisions, your business model cannot fail. *David Day, publicity, Forced Exposure*

STICKER SHOCK AND FACULTY LOUNGE Who needs a record label when there are MP3 blogs! *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

DIM MAK Dim Mak puts out consistently good shit—Panthers, Lion Fever, Bloc Party, you name it. *John Martin, Vice Magazine*

GET PHYSICAL The Germans have been on top form this year with their dirty electro-disco-house-ness. *Melissa Taylor, Fabric*

UBIQUITY This year Ubiquity really kicked things into hyperdrive and don't show any signs of slowing in '05. Releases from Greyboy, Shawn Lee, Quantic and the re-issue of Theo Parrish's *Parallel Dimensions* were all hot and diverse. *Adam Kurzawa, director of music marketing, Giant Step*



BEST LIVE EVENTS OF 2004

M.O.P. AT CANAL ROOM, NYC A couple hundred too-cool-for-school music industry knuckleheads reduced to pogoing, mashed-up high schoolers...rapping along, throwing drinks on each other and falling on their asses. Yes. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

C/O POP Cologne opens its doors to the world. Phoenix with T. Raumschmiere? Ada with Wighnomy Brothers? Villalobos and Hawtin, Kompakt 100, Oliver Hacked, Chicks on Speed with the KLF? Did I mention it's 17 days long? *David Day, publicity, Forced Exposure*

SAFE AS MILK In a small coastal Norwegian town, you'll find what appears to be a turn-of-the-century sea captain bar [where] the Safe As Milk Festival took place. The acts were varied and planned in succession so that each act built upon the last. But perhaps best of all was the communal spirit shared over the two days. *Jason Forrest (a.k.a. Donna Summer)*

MUTEK, CHILE Three days of utter debauchery and pure bliss! *Scott Monteith, Deadbeat*

MOVEMENT, DETROIT All of these European festivals are in gorgeous locations with amazing talent from all over the world, but they don't hold a candle to an afterhours party in an abandoned building in Detroit, full of some of America's best artists. It's a taste of the real deal. *Elliot Taub, Ulysses*



BEST MUSIC TRENDS OF 2004

DANCEHALL Not really a trend, but it was fun to hear so much good reggae on the radio and in the club this year. There were great fast rhythms, bringing in house and soca influences, and an amazing crop of roots and culture singles as well. Best DJs: Sizzla, Capleton, Baby Cham and Vyb3 Cartel. *Ayres Haxton, DJ Ayres*

CRUSTY SINGER-SONGWRITERS Sufjan Stevens, Iron and Wine, Milosh, Múm—anyone that makes songs. Just keep doing it please. It actually *does* matter and people really appreciate it. *Joshua Eustis, Telefon Tel Aviv*

ACID HOUSE With the money-grubbing bandwagon jumpers all out of business (or out of the business) the real heads can get back to basics and remind us of the pure, stripped down joy of a 909, 808 and 303 again. And what's even better is that you'd never know the difference between the old classics and the newest joints—they both sound so fresh! *Peter Wohelski, project manager, Studio Distribution*

ELECTROROCK Despite the backlash in the US, electronic music continues to bridge the rock gap with attitude. Labels like Kompakt (GER), DFA (US), Output (UK) and Karat (FRA) prove a healthy dose of personality goes a long way. *David Day, publicity, Forced Exposure*

STREET MIXTAPES Yeah, they've been around for a while, but they started to matter in 2004 (i.e. helped sell records). No longer just for the heads that were jonesing for exclusives, everybody from Steve-O to those Wayans dorks got in on the mixtape game. Recommended: DJ Drama's "Gangsta Grillz" series and DJ Small's "Southern Smoke" mixes. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

MP3/P2P COMMUNITIES The P2P sites are way more than just geeks stealing shit for free. No, these are the incubators for new music. Pretty much all the artists we'll be seeing in the next few years are already there, making beats and swapping files. *Jason Forrest (a.k.a. Donna Summer)*

WORST MUSIC TRENDS OF 2004

ROCKERS DJING Just because you have a decent record collection and play in a band doesn't mean that you deserve a booking agent and a calendar chock full of great DJ gigs. What about those of us who can't play instruments goddamn it! *James Fucking Friedman, US label manager, Output Recordings*

Learn to mix or get off the stage. I don't care if you're fabulous, in a band, or in a fabulous band, you couldn't mix two records if you had a blender. *Elliot Taub, Ulysses*

LIVE BANDS THAT PLAY OVER THEIR CDS Also known as *cheating!* The indie-rock equivalent of Milli Vanilli *Daniel Gill, vice president, Fanatic Promotion*

TIGHTENING THE NOOSE ON SAMPLING As far as I'm concerned, anything I ever do, consider it free to sample. These people making the laws are bugging the fuck out. Yes, hip-hop has been based on sampling from the beginning. Not every kid in the ghetto making beats can afford a 30-piece orchestra when looking for a string sample. Of course, economics and greed get in the way of creation and art yet again. *Prefuse 73*

REGGAETON The press wanted to jump on the bandwagon but reggaeton really isn't there yet. If Tego Calderon is the best vocalist they could come up with and all the rhythms ape early-'90s dancehall, the future isn't looking very bright for the bastard genre. *Ayres Haxton, DJ Ayres*

SPED-UP VOCAL SAMPLES It's not a new thing, but after Kanye did it, and continued to do it, too many beat makers have sped-up soul tracks, and end up sampling 16 bars of the song. Please get more creative and come with something new and your own. *Milton Campbell, Ohmega Watts*

TRANCEY TECHNO Something crappy this way arpeggiates... *Scott Monteith, Deadbeat*

APPLE IPOD Wake up people. You've bought into a *fucking* marketing scheme. And frankly, I don't care what's on your iPod. Nobody does. If the iPod is so ingenious, why does its display look like a goddamned DOS interface? *Carleton Curtis, editor*



ARTISTS WHO'LL BE BIG IN 2005

SA-RACREATIVE PARTNERS Find whatever you can get your hands on by them. Their time is way overdue. *Prefuse 73*

ANNIE She has a great album and a great image. *LocalPatron, Jazid Collective*

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM Set to do it real big in '05. Big tunes, big deals, big punk, big funk. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

BUSDRIVER Talented emcee abilities and top-notch record on Big Dada-Mush equals rest-of-the-world takeover—US to catch up in 2006. *Daedelus*

M.I.A. London's calling...again. This time we have a fly Sri Lankan princess (sorry, I have a soft spot for my brown sisters) mixing pop, ragga and hip-hop to make for some very likeable stuff. *Asif Mian, Evaq Studio*

SCISSORS SISTERS Elton John meets Donna Summer... an amazing combination. *Damon Way, exec VP of DC Shoes*

JAY TRIPWIRE He's already on his way and has quite a healthy appetite. *Luke McKeehan, owner, Nordic Trax*

THOMAS MORR'S PLATTERS DU JOUR

1. *The Shins Chutes Too Narrow* (Sub Pop)
2. *Badly Drawn Boy One Plus One Is One* (XL)
3. *Elliott Smith From A Basement On The Hill* (Domino)
4. *Death Cab For Cutie Transatlanticism* (Barsuk)
5. *Subtle* (Lex)

MJ COLE: FIVE RAVES AND FAVES

1. *Fatboy Slim Palookaville* (Skint-Astralwerks)
2. *The Streets A Grand Don't Come For Free* (679-Vice)
3. *Jill Scott Beautifully Human Words and Sounds Vol. 2* (Epic)
4. *Goldie Looking Chain-Greatest Hits* (Atlantic)
5. *Deepest Blue Deepest Blue* (Data)

1. Matthew Dear (Will Calcutt); 2. Tiefschwarz; 3. Lyrics Born (Paul O'Valle); 4. The Streets (Ewan Spencer); 5. TV On the Radio; 6. Diplo; 7. Golder; 8. Jean Grae; 9. Trevor Jackson of Output Recordings; 10. DJ T of Get Physical; 11. Tego Calderon; 12. Peanut Butter Wolf of Stones Throw; 13. Zap Mama cover art; 14. Múm (Orri); 15. Infinite Livez (Tom Oldham); 16. Busdriver; 17. Thomas Morr; 18. M.I.A. (Matt Titlow)



CULTURE

BEST GRAPHIC DESIGNERS & VISUAL ARTISTS OF 2004

MARK LOMBARDI His ability to see the power and the truth in structure, pattern and simply connecting facts cannot be more appropriate now. He must be doing something right if the FBI is after his work. And come on, who on earth works on one drawing for more than 10 years? Incredible. *Kenzo Minami, artist/designer*

BARRY MCGEE Barry is by no means new to the scene, but his work continues to push, grow and change as soon as the masses think they may be finally catching up. It's good to see the institutions recognizing something we've known for years. *Cody Hudson, Struggle Inc.*

DEZ EINSWELL As the art director of Sound in Color, he creates a very well thought-out unifying aesthetic with each release that really makes the label's art stand out. *Doug E. Smiley (DJ Shakeyface), director of marketing, Studio Distribution*

GIRL SKATEBOARD CO/ART DUMP COLLECTIVE Andy Mueller, Andy Jenkins, Rob Abeyta Jr., Tony Larson and the rest of the dudes behind the Girl Skateboards/Lakai/Chocolate trinity hold down the graphics for stoned, sensitive skaters everywhere. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

MAYA HAYUK She barnstorms with the stormers and paints hairy people fucking on the cover of my record. *Prefuse 73*

LAURENT FETIS This guy is bananas. I love all of his work, from the stuff he's done with Roman Coppola to his cover for Gigolo to the limited edition bandannas. Super cool and super tasteful to boot. *James Fucking Friedman, US label manager, Output Recordings*

SOAP DESIGN You can tell they put a lot of thought into each project. In this day of one week deadlines, it's refreshing to see firm ideas and high production values. *Peter Hahn, creative director, Turntable Lab/Money Studies*

JAMAL QUTUB He and a team at his new design firm created a community site called www.illvill.com. It's pretty dope and filled with mad hidden things in its cities. *Milton Campbell, Ohmega Watts*

ROE ETHRIDGE The photographer of the universe. Haven't seen new work in a while after the Roe-ing of 2001 (Fischerspooner, Andrew WK), but watch out. *Sam Valenti IV, Ghostly International*

EVAQ He is down with Decon so I am a little biased, but the kid got talent. Designing t-shirts with 2K, DVDs for The Roots, music videos for Aceyalone and Goapele and all while making his art. *Peter Bittenbender, president, Decon*

MAT BRINKMAN Mat refuses to play the game and that's why you've never heard of him. He's an amazing visual artist; he's even been selected for the Whitney Biennial a couple years back, but you've still never heard of him, right? *Howard Robot, My Robot Friend*

BEST SHOES OF 2004

DOGG AND PONY If you have them you know what I am talking about. If not, start the search. *Damon Way, exec VP of DC Shoes*

LE COQ SPORTIF Lots of colors—and what's better than walking around with a sporty cock on your feet? *Charlie Cooper, Telefon Tel Aviv*

VANDALS Rock the Velcro behind the tongue for proper effect. *Abe Burmeister, Abstract Dynamics*

ONITSUKA TIGER Asics has managed to revive their image and resurrect a classic and dope line of late 20th century Japanese shoes. *Aaron Schultz, Bastard Jazz Recordings*

WHITE ADIDAS GAZELLE So tasteful and sturdy. Looked good white and even better as they got worked in. *Simon Halliday, Warp US*

WHITE NIKE AIR FORCE ONE I consider this as one of the neo-classics. It belongs right next to Burberry trench coats, Dior black suits and Tiffany wedding rings at this point. *Kenzo Minami, artist/designer*

ADIDAS MUNDIAL GOALS They're black with orange stripes and a dual-colored sole. Lovely sneaker for the sporty football (soccer) poser. *Milton Campbell, Ohmega Watts*

CONVERSE CHUCK TAYLORS No leather, durable, always fresh, cheap, timeless. *Ken Dyber, Aesthetics*

DIADORA Cheap, comfy and Italian! *David Day, publicity, Forced Exposure*

NIKE BLAZER It's a documented fact that my favorite shoe is the 95 AirMax. But Blazers had a phenomenal summer comeback. The pink swooshes was *heatness*, kid. Definitely good to counter the AF1/Bapesta phenom, which is cool too, but yaknowhamsayin. *Bill McMullen (Billions McMillions), designer, SWISHNYC*

CLARK'S WALLABEES Cushy comfort and classic funk. *Scott Monteith, Deadbeat*



BEST CLOTHING LINES OF 2004

COMMONWEALTH STACKS One of the few surprises in this predictable world. *Peter Hahn, creative director, Turntable Lab/Money Studies*

AMERICAN APPAREL The only reason not to buy second-hand. *David Day, publicity, Forced Exposure*

GREY ANT Cheeky but slick and modular at once. This is the shit I get for my girlfriend to cement her as the cutest girl on road. *Alex Threadgold, SOUND|iNK Records*

PERKS AND MINI I love the stuff they make with screenprinting all over the fabric, from polka-dotted army jackets to a zip-up hoodie that looks like it's made of bricks. *James Fucking Friedman, US label manager, Output Recordings*

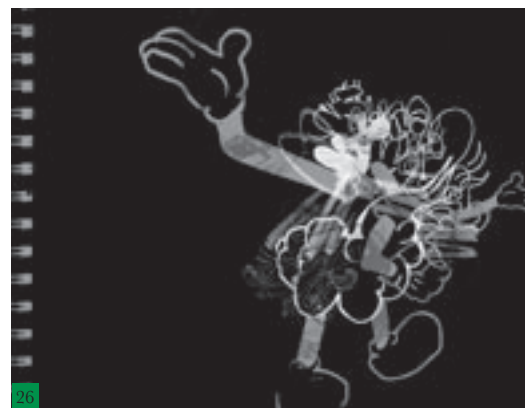
LACOSTE Preppiness without the geekiness. *Kristeen Laut, media specialist, Ubisoft*

IMAGINARY FOUNDATION Wearing IF clothing, I always get a reaction from the people around me. *Jeff Taylor Cross, audio product marketing manager, Apple Computers*

UNIS Taking hipster boys out of their Shroud of Turin-esque Stryper shirts and putting them into something a little more refined. *Brion Paul, Mistakes Aloud*

THE JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT FOUNDATION His kin put out an authentic line of his work. Makes all these "graf"-inspired lines look played. *Asif Mian, Evaq Studio*

DICKIES Fuck all that high-end designer bullshit. Order direct from Dickies and buy yourself a monotone uniform for every day of the week. You'll never have to worry about what to wear ever again, plus, you'll be completely stain resistant and ghetto-approved. *Howard Robot, My Robot Friend*



BEST STYLE TRENDS OF 2004

WHATEVER BEANS IS WEARING Because only he's gonna rock it like that. *Prefuse 73*

BUTTON-UP DRESS SHIRT 'Bout time brothas started dressing like businessmen (at least from the waist up). You're not 20 and standin' on the corner anymore. Thanks Jay-Z. *DJ Bone, Subject Detroit*

JAPANESE HIPSTERS WITH PERMS Nothing makes my day more than walking in the East Village and seeing some Asian dude with a super-duper soul-shockin' afro that dwarfs mine! *Rico (a.k.a. Superbizzee), membership manager, Giant Step*

EGL IN AMERICA Elegant Gothic Lolitas can teach us all a lesson as to the connection between French maids, black metal, Victorians, Strawberry Shortcake and bandages. *Daedelus*

WHITE TEES Can't go wrong with a clean white tee. It's nice that hip-hop artists are no longer encouraging kids to blow all their dough on a \$300 sweater with Tweety Bird on it. *Ayres Haxton, DJ Ayres*

WORST STYLE TRENDS OF 2004

TREATED DENIM Acid wash and frosted jeans, remember those? Leave it alone. Possibly acceptable if you're a girl (not really), but guys rocking this, especially in large matching quantities? Come on kids. Shit-wash is more like it. *Cody Hudson, Struggle Inc.*

DRESSING UP RAP Magenta argyle Phat Farm Capri pants? It's a wrap, Russell. You can't walk around looking like an acid casualty that shops in country club cut-out bins. Seriously, you can't. *Stephen Christian, Warp Records*

RAMONES T-SHIRTS BEING SOLD IN THE MALL *Daniel Gill, vice president, Fanatic Promotion*

PLASTIC JELLY SHOES They need to stay where they were—in the '80s. *Kristeen Laut media specialist, Ubisoft*

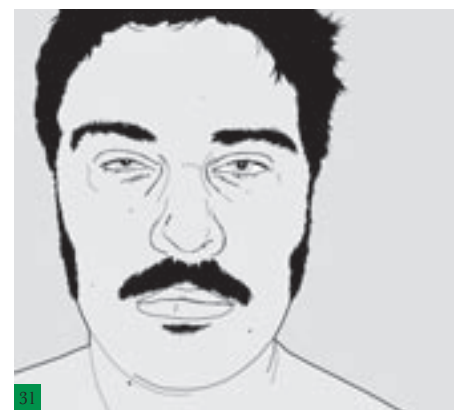
UGG BOOTS Nothing screamed fashion victim more than seeing some lady in pastel pink Eskimo boots walking down Broadway in July. *Jason Forrest (a.k.a. Donna Summer)*

9. Maya Hayuk; 20. Nike Blazer; 21. Nike Air Force One; 22. Diadora; 23. Converse Chuck Taylors; 24. Wallabees; 25. elegant gothic lolita; 26. Evaq; 27. Imaginary Foundation t-shirt; 28. Beans (Jessica Miller); 29. Sarah at Pull My Daisy; 30. Uggs; 31. UPSO self-portrait



SARAH AT PULL MY DAISY'S TOP 5 INDIE FASHION OF 2004

1. **Reissue:** Le Tigre men's striped polo
2. **Political t-shirts:** Anti-Bush shirts by Clothing of the American Mind
3. **Bag:** Record bag by Queen Bee, Portland
4. **Young designer:** LA's Jessica Louise
5. **DiY accessory:** Duct tape wallets



UPS0'S TOP 5 ALBUMS TO WORK TO IN 2004

1. Rob Sonic *Telicatessen* (Def Jux)
2. The Knife *Deep Cuts* (Rabid)
3. Ministry *Houses of the Molé* (Sanctuary)
4. Circus Vs. Andre Afram Asmar *Gawd Bless The Faceless Cowards* (Mush)
5. Anything by Talking Heads or De La Soul



TECHNOLOGY

BEST MUSIC HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE OF 2004

ABLETON LIVE My friend recommended this program to me when I blurted out something I wanted to put on a t-shirt: "Playing music on your laptop is *not* funky." I guess I was wrong. It got me back into seriously producing beats even though I have a collection of drum machines the size of Lil' Bow Wow. *Bill McMullen (Billions McMillions), designer, SWISHNYC*

Just when you thought they couldn't make it better, easier and more intuitive, Ableton makes it better, easier, and more intuitive! Live 4 takes music making and DJing to the next level! *Peter Wohelski, project manager, Studio Distribution*

NATIVE INSTRUMENTS GUITAR RIG Guitar Rig is the ish. Unfadeable. NI is constantly bringing the ruckus. *Joshua Eustis, Telefon Tel Aviv*

TECHNICS 1200 TURNTABLE Thirty years and still going! Technology has yet to catch-up to the Technics turntable. There's software and CD players that make DJing *easier* but not *better*. *DJ Bone, Subject Detroit*

APPLE LOGIC PRO 7 It incorporates the real-time loop-playing and timestretching capabilities of Live, along with dozens of powerful built-in plug-ins, the ability to bounce each track of a song separately at once, and burn CDs right from the program. It also slices, dices, stops dandruff, removes unwanted facial hairs, and stops the heartbreak of psoriasis. *Elliot Taub, Ulysses*

PIONEER DJM 909 Fifty effects in a top-of-the-line battle mixer? Yes, please. *Ayres Haxton, DJ Ayres*

COLUMBIA PORTABLE RECORD PLAYER MODEL GP-3 Love it. I even gave one to Derrick Carter for his 30th birthday some years ago. *LocalPatron, Jazid Collective*

ELECTRONIC GADGETS YOU COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT IN 2004

PALMONE TREO 600 Cell phone, SMS, PDA, email and camera in one—it's all about the nanotech swarm! I'll be the first in line to get forearm implants when they come out. *Alex Threadgold, SOUND|iNK Records*

BLACKBERRY Integrated PDAs are where it's at. Death to the cell phone! *Rico (a.k.a. Superbizzee), membership manager, Giant Step*

EVOLUTION UC-33 MIDI CONTROLLER Cheap, rugged and USB powered. A must for tweakers on the move. *Scott Monteith, Deadbeat*



BEST VIDEOGAMES OF 2004

NINJA GAIDEN (TECMO) The classic really came of age this year thanks to that liquid Prince of Persia engine. Tough as nails but hella engrossing. *Alex Threadgold, SOUND|iNK Records*

ESPN NBA 2K5 (ESPN) The graphics are tight, plus who wants to spend \$50 on a game when these joints are the price of a \$20 bag. *Peter Bittenbender, president, Decon*

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY (EA) The videogame world gets a heavy dose of hip-hop. Get past the final stage and see Lil' Kim's breasts! Wait—that's no incentive. I see them every week in *Vibe*. *Rico (a.k.a. Superbizzee), membership manager, Giant Step*

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES (NINTENDO) Holy shit. It's not even out yet, but if you don't know what I'm talking about, then you don't know anything about videogames at all. There is no question as to what this game is going to do for the world. *Joshua Eustis, Telefon Tel Aviv*

POLE POSITION (ATARI) I still have the highest score in a deli in Lodi, NJ. *Asif Mian, Evaq Studio*



MOUSE ON MARS' FIVE THINGS THEY COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT IN 2004

1. **Movie:** *Brazil* by Terry Gilliam A timeless movie showing the stagnation of the human race; dark and beautiful.
2. **Book:** *Mudunculum* by Dieter Roth The universal alphabet by the most productive German artists of the last century.
3. **Music:** *La Mere* by Claude Debussy Soundcolour, symphonic complexity and musical narration in a perfect and tense blend.
4. **Country:** *Italy* Paradise for coffee, mozzarella and human beings.
5. **Gear:** *Bicycle* Unavoidable on tour and around the studio.

32. Laurent Fets 33. BlackBerry 6000
34. Barry McGee 35. Mouse On Mars;
36. Apple Logic Pro 7 screen;
37. Ableton Live screen;
38. ESPN NBA 2K5

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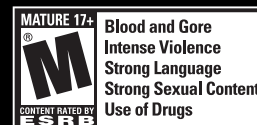


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ABSTRACT TRADITION

Japan's foremost instrumental hip-hop producer, DJ Krush, finally returns home.

Words: Martin Turenne
Photos: Christopher Woodcock



Though the world teems with indigenous versions of hip-hop—varying wildly from Frankfurt to Cape Town and beyond—Japan's DJ Krush is the only foreign hip-hop artist who has managed to change the way Americans make music.

Krush is the godfather of the abstract form, a producer whose penchant for meditative rhythms and sinister atmospheres helped give rise to such artists as DJ Shadow, El-P, and their legion of descendants. With such early releases as 1994's *Strictly Turntablized* and 1995's *Meiso*, the Tokyo-based boardsman stretched the definition of what hip-hop could be, offering a brooding alternative to the jewel-encrusted excess of commercial rap.

Such is Krush's humble outlook that even when he's flossing, he does so in an understated fashion—his sole extravagance is a diamond-studded belt buckle bearing his name. Relaxing backstage at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, the producer acknowledges the bauble with a sly grin, allowing that he's reached his own personal bling threshold with its purchase.

When it's suggested that such Stateside indie crews as Anticon and Def Jux might not exist without his influence, Krush smiles once more, this time more bashful than sly. "I've always talked about giving something back to the American people," he says through an interpreter, "to the people that gave me hip-hop and all the power that comes from that style of music. If there are American artists that have been influenced by me, that makes me feel like I've accomplished an important goal."

Secure in the knowledge that he's made his mark on hip-hop, Krush came to something of a turning point after the release of 2002's *Shinsou: The Message at the Depth*. In some respects, that album represented a summation of the producer's achievements, uniting as it did his mentors (like dub legends Sly & Robbie) and disciples (including members of Anticon and the Anti-pop Consortium). Coming home after promoting that album over a hectic six-month period, the Tokyo native perceived Japan anew, taking nightly fishing trips off the coast of Chiba to reflect on his—and his homeland's—identity.

"When I come back to Japan after touring, I spent a lot of time looking over my life," recalls the one-time b-boy and graf writer. "When I had a chance to go fishing at night, I felt how peaceful it was to feel the atmosphere on the sea and see the land from afar. This is something that for me is a very Japanese feeling, the special way that the atmosphere feels when the water is peaceful.

"Throughout my career," he continues, "I've always been away from Japan for long periods of time. This time in particular I was gone for a long time and able to see Japan more clearly with new eyes."

When it came time for him to sketch out ideas for a new album, Krush embraced his heritage with vigor, purchasing a half-dozen instrumental albums composed in traditional Japanese styles: *minyo* (celebratory folk

"I always have to regulate and not let the machine rule me. I rule the machine."



music), *gagaku* (a type of classical music), and *mikagura* (a religious style developed by Shinto priests). Listening to these records, says Krush, changed his definition of what it means to be Japanese.

"You don't listen to your own country's traditional music when you're growing up," maintains Krush. "I've never really had a chance to listen to my own country's traditional music but, by listening to those albums, I could see that there's a lot of good music that I need to discover and listen to."

Early last year, Krush reached out to several traditional players, soliciting contributions for the album that would become *Jaku* (a Japanese word meaning calm or peace). More luminous than the grime-encrusted *Shinsou*, *Jaku* makes a nice companion piece to 2001's *Zen*, a similarly even-tempered exploration of peaceful themes. But where *Zen* was a decidedly pan-continental affair (featuring contributions from Nigerian percussionist Tunde Ananyemi, Korean vocalist Sunja Lee and British singer N'Dea Davenport, among others), *Jaku* finds Krush unearthing his roots, collaborating with a half-dozen talented countrymen to produce the most Japanese-sounding tracks of his career.

Chief among these is "Univearth," which features *taiko* drummer Tetsuro Naito laying down licks over cowbells and a soul-clap anchor, the finished piece sounding like an old-school joint as produced under the influence of too much sake. Elsewhere, "Still Island" is backed by the dulcet tones emanating from Shuuzan Morita's *shakuhachi*, a bamboo flute which allows the player more subtle tonal shading than its Continental counterpart.

Where most of the album proceeds at a pensive pace, *Jaku*'s "Beyond Raging Waves" packs a flurry of devastating punches, most of them forcefully delivered by Shinichi Kinoshita, the world's premier *shamisen* player. A central figure in Japanese classical music, Shinichi plucks the *shamisen* (a three-stringed lute) rapidly to produce a sound not unlike the Indian sitar; played against a backdrop of *taiko* drums and cymbal crashes, his part demonstrates the links between Japanese and North Indian musical forms, just the sort of pan-cultural project for which Krush is best known.

A longtime and fervent proponent of analog gear, Krush does the strangest of things when he's making beats these days: he cues up his laptop. Where he once vowed he'd never use such tools, the producer has in recent years entered the digital age, first using computers on 2002's *Shinsou*, and subsequently producing the bulk of *Jaku* on similar equipment. What's perhaps most surprising about this development is how little it has altered the Krush aesthetic; his drums are still soot-soaked, his melodic stabs still startling, his atmospheres still eerie.

"I was gone for a long time and able to see Japan ...with new eyes."

KRUSH'S TOP HIP-HOP PRODUCERS

RYO ARAI (TOKYO)

"If you have a chance to listen to him, you should, because he always makes music that is really simple—basic kick and snare and little bits of melody—but he does it in a way that is all his own."

MADLIB (LOS ANGELES)

"All I can say about Madlib is that he makes the sort of music that I could never make. I just bought Madvillain and I really, really like it."

JAY DEE (DETROIT)

"Like with Madlib, the way he makes music is something that I couldn't do. His music always sounds very personal. Whenever you listen to one of his songs, you know right away that it's Jay Dee."

HIDEO SASAKI (TOKYO)

"He's another Japanese producer that more people around the world should get to know. He's just a real hip-hop guy through and through, the sort of person that lives hip-hop."

THE OPUS (CHICAGO)

"I like to say that making my music is like drawing a painting. I enjoy tracks made by The Opus because they use the same sorts of paints, the same darker shades that I like."

"No matter what I use, what comes out is the most important thing," insists the producer. "No matter how many tracks I have to work with or how many options I have, the Krush sound is always there. I always have to regulate and not let the machine rule me. I rule the machine."

If computers have not significantly changed the producer's recordings, the same cannot be said of his live show in Vancouver. With his backing tracks—usually comprised of drums, bass and a melodic counterpoint—emanating from his laptop, the DJ frees himself up to use both of his turntables to strictly textural effect, pulling his sound into the third dimension with a series of delicately vibrational scratches. Krush is no turntable wizard by today's battle standards, but what he lacks in technical trickery he more than makes up for with compositional acumen, layering sounds to the consistent amazement of his loyal followers.

Called back to the stage for an encore by his rabid fans, the grey-haired selector plays DJ Nu-Mark's recent cut-and-pasted version of John Lennon's "Imagine," an apt selection given Nu-Mark's obvious debt to the Krush sound. Here, we witness a Japanese DJ playing an American cover version of a famous Brit's signature solo song to a roomful of hushed Canadians. In the best-case scenario, this is what free trade sounds like.

Jaku is out now on Red Ink-Sony. www.mmjp.or.jp/sus/krush

THE FREE THREE

SA-RA Creative Partners rebuilds soul and R&B with classic psychedelic funk blueprints.

Words: Zaid Muddafer
Photos: Diego Carlin

In an ample recording studio strewn with musical instruments located somewhere in a labyrinthine BBC complex nestled away on a smart North London street, SA-RA's Om'Mas Keith tends to a discarded double bass, plucking a few deep twangs around the room.

He's recording a session for Gilles Peterson's Worldwide radio show with fellow SA-RA member Taz Arnold (third member Shafiq Husayn isn't around) and accompanying vocalist Irisna Gayle, but listening to them perform half a dozen songs to beats emanating from Keith's laptop is far from appreciating the full picture.

The SA-RA story—some would say hype—spread globally by way of CD-R. A little over a year ago, the group circulated a couple of generously filled discs to a select few A&R people, DJs and tastemakers, informing them that SA-RA were not merely producers who made beats, but artists who made *songs*. Their sound was essentially hip-hop but infused with the slick funk-pop sheen of Cameo, the raw sexual edge of *Dirty Mind*-era Prince, the spacey sonics of Jay Dee and the punchy, clubby aesthetic of The Neptunes, all with a novel, modernist twist.

What the songs didn't explain was that SA-RA's business strategy is as honed as their musical one: Keith, Husayn and Arnold—products of Hollis, Queens, the Bronx and South Central LA, respectively—collectively co-manage their company, SA-RA Creative Partners. "On the corporate side that's how we get down, it's very businesslike," explains Keith. "SA-RA the group is the same people, just a different concept and removed from the corporate. Point blank: we're all 10-year veterans of this industry in one way or another." Keith put in hours engineering Mobb Deep and Foxy Brown records; Husayn was in-house producer "for every single Ice-T album that ever came out" and Taz Arnold's company consulted extensively on Dr. Dre's acclaimed *2001* project.

"Who else you know of that's working with Spacek and J-Lo?"





SA-RA Creative Partners (left to right): Om'Mas Keith, Taz Arnold and Shafiq Husayn

“A lot of the time we were finding ourselves at a stalemate with artists.”

suit. Less in need of styling is Taz Arnold; a spiky mohawk crowns his sharp wardrobe-garb that reflects SA-RA's eclectic musical zest. But despite his artfully funky threads, Arnold and his cohorts' business side is no less salient. “We're a creative house—SA-RA Creative Partners provides creative solutions to the music world in general. Not to sound so corporate, but everything we do falls under that umbrella,” he says. “If you look at companies you either have an ultra-creative company which doesn't have the presence in the marketplace or you have a big corporate infrastructure which lacks creativity. What we set out to do was to merge the two.”

But in addition to the business and production side of the partnership, SA-RA felt it was important to nurture their own output as artists. “[It's] a throwback to another era,” Keith says of the group's creative endeavors, which encompass not only playing instruments but also engineering, writing and singing lyrics. “A lot of the time we were finding ourselves at a stalemate with artists. They'd be saying, ‘Wow, we love the sound but what do we do with it?’ So from SA-RA Creative Partners as producers, enter SA-RA [the artists]. We started recording these crazy songs—for ourselves primarily—and once the artists got wind of it they were like, ‘That's the shit we want! We want your sound.’ It's a creation. At the end of the day we are making art.”

Whether they can maintain their art and stringent business acumen as two separate entities remains to be seen. Says Arnold: “We decided to take our destinies in our own hands and be the artists, be the production company, be the producers and the executives behind our own thing and *make* it happen, as opposed to going to other people and saying, ‘Is this good enough?’”

“We're coming from [the mindset of producers like] Phil Ramone, Jam and Lewis and Quincy,” says Keith. “We're also devout students of popular songwriting. We're bridging the gap in a big way—who else you know of that's working with Spacek and J-Lo? It's our little secret but we've got a formula down; we know how to make big records.”

SA-RA's debut album will be released by Ubiquity Records spring 2005.

www.sa-ra.net, www.ubiquityrecords.com

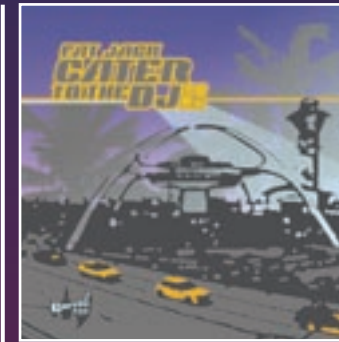
“About two and a half years ago cats got the idea to put this SA-RA thing together when we heard there void in the music,” Keith explains. “This whole thing started off primarily to make the music we wanted to hear, because we wasn't hearing what we're making. Taz and Shafiq were in LA; I was working a day job in New York at a big advertising agency. But don't get it twisted, [we've had gold record] plaques on the wall for years and years, you know? We'd been working individually before we got this thing together and that's why it's easy to make that transition, because we were already in the game for so long.”

Their work now includes an eclectic array of major and indie label efforts including a single on ABB, an experimental album on Ubiquity, a collaborative effort with a group spearheaded by Erykah Badu called Mandingo/Zombie, a project on Sound In Color featuring Pharoahe Monch, Jay Dee and possibly Ghostface, and production work for the likes of Common, J-Lo, Jill Scott, Bilal and Killer Mike.

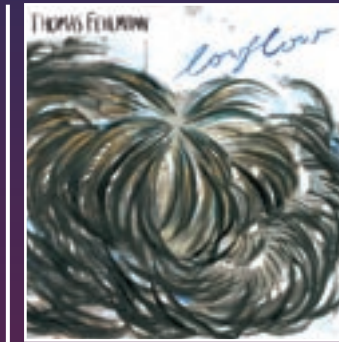
Back in the BBC studios, in between describing their history, Keith queries the way to Saville Row in London, and a new



COPYWRITE
Cruise Control
New 'mixtape style' album from Megahertz/Weathermen MC, Copywrite. Featuring production from J Dilla, Bink!, Jake One, J-Zone and more.



FAT JACK
Cater to the DJ Vol. 2
Legendary LA underground producer Fat Jack's highly anticipated sequel featuring guest appearances by Aceyalone, Swollen Members, Abstract Rude and many more.



THOMAS FEHLMANN
Lowflow
The new downbeat album by The Orb's floating member with friendly support by Dabrye.



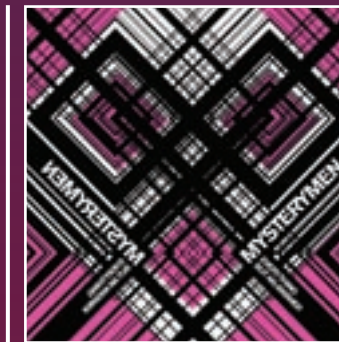
GO FIND
Miami
This is what happens when the world of indie rock collides with the world of electronic music. Produced by Styrofoam.



GRAVENHURST
Black Holes in the Sand
Folk sensation Gravenhurst (aka Nick Talbot) returns after his well-received *Flashlight Seasons with Black Holes in the Sand*. One of the most exciting releases of the year, with beautiful production and an amazing attention to detail, Gravenhurst creates lush, emotional landscapes with delicately picked guitars, penetrating vocals, and subdued atmospheres.



HIGH & MIGHTY
Eastern Conference All Stars 4
The High & Mighty are back with their usual counterparts. The album features all new songs by Weathermen, Copywrite, Tame One, Vast Aire, Leak Bros, Guru, Ice City and Freeway.

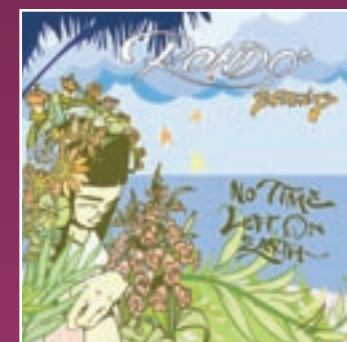


MYSTERYMEN
Everything But an Answer
Their debut album on Disko B features a compact diversity of tracks such as “Fast Bitches,” with its trashy noise beats and ominous Atari vocals, to the warm melodic beauty of “Sleepy Elvis.” This album is destined to be a classic.

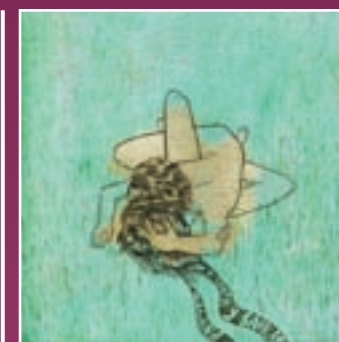


R.A. THE RUGGED MAN
Die, Rugged Man, Die
The long awaited debut album from one of the rap game's most respected lyricists. Finally hip-hop has integrity again. *Die, Rugged Man, Die* features Masta Killa, Killah Priest, Ayatollah and more!

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RONDO BROTHERS
No Time Left on Earth
A blend of alternative electronica & Hawaiian music featuring the smash single, “Hey Stewardess.” A musical Luau to warm up those cold winter nights!!!! Get ‘tei-ed’ with the Rondo Brothers!



SAVATH & SAVALAS
Manana
Manana is a collection of eight tracks exclusive to this release. Eva's stunning vocal inflections are present once again, providing a sultry addition to Heren's mix of electronic and organic atmospheres. Continuing to show his breadth as both a songwriter and producer, Scott is able to effortlessly separate himself from the thick electronic funk of his Prefuse 73 moniker and, with Eva, creates bright slices of Spanish psychedelia.



CHINNA SMITH/AUGUSTUS PABLO
Dub It!
“Dub It!” features a who's who of reggae's legendary musicians including Carlton Barrett, Leroy “Horsemouth” Wallace and the late great Augustus Pablo. Recorded and produced in 1980 by veteran session guitarist Earl “Chinna” Smith of Rockers fame, he is also the creator of many of Reggae music's most enduring rhythms. This music has never before been available in dub format.



STYROFOAM
Nothing's Lost
Electro-pop artist Styrofoam is back with easily his best to date. Features guest appearances by Ben Gibbard (Death Cab For Cutie, The Postal Service), Mankus Acher (The Notwist, Lali Puna), Valerie Trebeljahr (Lali Puna) and more. On tour in the US in November.

RASTA ON TOP

Conscious Jamaican sing-jay Anthony B wraps his locks and looks to bridge the gap between dancehall and rap.

Words: David Katz
Photos: Mireya Acierio



Bob Marley said music alone shall live, so I want to contribute something good towards society, towards life," states conscious rasta sing-jay Anthony B. At a time when Jamaican music is facing criticism for expressing extreme views that many find alienating, Anthony B's uplifting outlook is refreshing.

When he first picked up the mic on a neighborhood sound system some 16 years ago, sexually suggestive "slackness" and ultra-violent "gun talk" held sway, but the DJ steadfastly refused to deal with such meager topics. Since then, he's consistently gone against the grain of hardcore dancehall, staying crucial through a dozen popular and profitable albums.

The versatile vocalist explains: "I don't see music as something to be boasting about. I see it like you're a mechanic or a pilot: this is your job, your purpose of being here. I want to do music that my mother can listen to, feel proud that I can play it in front of my kids. I think that keeps the positivity at a level." Now, hardly a new riddim set is issued without a side featuring Anthony B, and this year the DJ was once again one of the most in-demand artists at the annual Reggae on the River event in Garberville, California.

Keith Anthony Blair was born and raised in a rural farming community in the impenetrable Cockpit Country of western Jamaica; his grandmother descended from the Maroons, defiant runaway slaves that established self-sufficient communities in the mountains. At the age of 12, Blair went to live with an uncle in Portmore to further his education; the sprawling, mosquito-ridden city, presently blighted by street violence, is an aggregation of social housing projects built on a landfill to ease Kingston's chronic overcrowding. Adapting to the urban environment was a challenge, resulting in many changes for the youth; the move also brought him to the rastafari brethren at Bobo Hill, the large rasta camp established by Prince Emmanuel Edwards in Bull Bay, Jamaica.

A distinct sect within the larger Rastafarian community in Jamaica (that also includes the 12 Tribes of Israel and Niyabinghi orders), the Bobo dreads are noted for wearing turbans, taking vows

of poverty and selling brooms; the elder Emmanuel is their charismatic, deified leader. "Emmanuel's teaching is so simple," Blair fondly explains. "The only thing Emmanuel is saying is 'God is love, so let us all love,' because if we are praising God, how can I shoot you in the name of God and kill you in the name of religion? He teaches us not to be violent and to be humble, because within humility, love will reign."

After Hurricane Gilbert battered Jamaica in 1988, young Blair and his peers began honing their deejay skills at weekly sound system sessions; known figures like Shabba Ranks and Super Cat gave their blessings, though apparently Prince Emmanuel did not. "I couldn't wear a turban when I performed," Blair laments, "because Emmanuel doesn't see reggae music as rasta spiritual music. He didn't approve of Bobos being reggae artists because he sees Niyabinghi music as spiritual music and says reggae music is like a business."

Nevertheless, when friends such as Buju Banton, Terror Fabulous, Baby Wayne and Beenie Man hit big, Blair was determined to make the grade. His conscious lyrics and sing-jay style were somewhat uncommon then, and he reveals the style was drawn from irreconcilably different sources. "Ninjaman is always an artist I look on, cause Ninjaman is one of the great performers who brings life to the music," says Blair. "Watching a movie and listening to the words, that's like looking at Ninjaman, but Peter Tosh is the lyricist that I admire for inspiration."

Blair evidently draws more from Tosh than Ninja, as his tone and lyrics both

"If we are praising God, how can I shoot you in the name of God and kill you in the name of religion?"



"I don't try to dilute the music."

echo the rasta firebrand's gravity. Perhaps, though, Ninjaman's fearsome persona has contributed to Blair's fiery stage presence—a far cry from the humility and shyness he displays in person.

Success at a 1994 talent contest resulted in well-received performances at Sunsplash and Sting, two of Jamaica's biggest live events; producer Richard "Bello" Bell then signed Blair to the Star Trail label, beginning a long and fruitful association. His first local hit, "Repentance Time," called for Bounty Killer and Beenie Man to stop feuding; international attention came with "Fire Pon Rome," an outstanding number that was *banned* in Jamaica because it named politicians and prominent businesspeople as ultimately exploitive forces.

Subsequent recordings like "Raid The Barn" and "Universal Struggle" solidified his uncompromising reputation as a spokesman for the oppressed, while "Waan Back" decried the violence and negative expression that was curtailing dancehall's international potential. A recent collaboration with Culture on a re-vamped "Two Sevens Clash" is another notable effort, as is the superb AIDS awareness single, "HIV."

With the release of the new crossover-minded *Untouchable* album, issued by the independent Togetherness label in conjunction with Universal, Blair has entered a

whole new arena. Incorporating a range of music styles and featuring big names from the rap world, the disc is easily his most commercial to date and, although some numbers are more successful than others, it's all in keeping with Blair's usual ethos. The celebratory "Lighter," featuring Ghostface Killah, is proving popular with American audiences and Fugees leader Wyclef's contribution to the committed "Soldiers" adds depth to an exploration of the Iraq war, though the Snoop Dogg vehicle "What Would U Do" fares less well. Blair says he's hoping the album will help reggae music to reclaim its former glory.

"We're trying to make a groundbreaking step where positive music is concerned," he explains, "because there's no reggae company that's giving the positive artists this kind of chance. We see where dancehall is dying out because it's not pushing anything positive, so I'm hoping to reach a wider audience with the positive side of the music. We're just saying that we are untouchable because I don't try to dilute the music; it's still not slack and it's still not derogatory. I don't try to put down no form of people in the world in my music; instead, I try to uplift the spirit of all people."

Untouchable is out now on Togetherness Records. For more on the Bobo rastafarians: www.bbc.co.uk/1extra/tx/documentaries/bobodreads.shtml



JUMP START THE NIGHT

ALL THAT YASS

From the 1950s to now, Poland's love affair with jazz has never waned.

Words: Martin Przybyla
Photo: Grzegorz Korczak

There are a couple hints to the clandestine nature of Poland's Communist-era free jazz buried deep on Skalpel's latest self-titled Ninja Tune release, but you might have missed them if your Polish is a little rusty.

On the aptly titled track "Theme From Behind The Curtain" a voice accusingly states: "*Mnie si wydaje, e problem polega na tym, co oni naprawd robi, kiedy niby graj ten...jazz.*" Translation: "It seems to me the problem is what they're actually *doing* when they're supposedly playing this... 'jazz.'" The sample is a reminder of the uneasy relationship Poland's former government had with its artists and musicians, and how 50 years under a totalitarian regime affected the psyche of the EU's biggest new kid on the block.

Skalpel is what you get after you spend years digging through crates of raffish

American and European jazz vinyl and put it into a blender with precise turntable and production skills. Their self-titled LP plays homage to the warm tones and intricate experimentation found in old-school Polish jazz. Tracks like the conga-laden opener "High" and the swaggering "Not Too Bad" are nostalgic soundtracks for a voyage into communist outer-space, all adapted for high-fidelity modern living.

Touring with labelmates like DJ Vadim and Bonobo, Skalpel is finally drawing some much-deserved attention to Poland's unique electronic jazz scene, which has long flourished below the radar of music journalism. Poland's electronic jazz scene has a distinctly Eastern European flavor, often mixing live guitars, bass and horns with samplers and DJs inspired by a long tradition of dedicated musicianship and the country's turbulent history.

Poland's isolation from Western influences created a singular musical aesthetic wrapped up in a kitschy socialist cover, giving rise to the country's atypical sense of self-deprecating humor and musical satire. Macio Moretti, drummer for psychotic pseudo-hillbilly outfit Mitch & Mitch, notes that this tongue-in-cheek approach is their

"They started something big."



1. Skalpel
2. Mitch & Mitch (Aga Rasinska)
3. Pink Freud's Wojtek at the 2004 Warsaw Summer Jazz Festival (Martin Przybyla)
4. Baaba
5. Bassisters Orchestra
6. Robotobibok (Maciek B.)



the people in the earlier *yass* scene in Gdansk and Bydgoszcz. They started something big."

Today, the underground scene in Poland is largely a DIY business, centered around venues like the Jazzgot in Warsaw's infamous Palace of Culture. A handful of indie labels, such as Asphalt Records, Gusstaff, MIK, and recent upstart LadoABC are pushing the scene forward while albums like Pink Freud's *yass*-inspired *Sorry Music Polska* have shown the potential of the current crop of Polish electro-jazz artists. Tracks like the album's nearly unidentifiable cover of Nirvana's "Come As You Are" prove that, even as Poland's electronic scene continues to absorb Western influences, it retains a unique style.

trademark. "Recently," says Moretti, "I started to wonder how big an effect the Communist era had on our music, all the behavior modes acquired during this time. Maybe that's also the key to our attitude and the things we started doing."

It's impossible to overstate the influence avant-garde jazz artists like trumpeter Tomasz Stanko or Krzysztof Komeda (best known for his scores to Polanski films *Knife in the Water* and *Rosemary's Baby*) have had on Poland's musicians. Their form of experimental free jazz had an inimitable fuzzy-on-the-inside vodka-fueled warmth reminiscent of your local Polish cellar bar in the dead of winter. It's a musical legacy that can be heard in many of today's acts, from Wrocław's jungle-jazz pioneers Robotobibok to the breakbeat, electrojazz and cartoon-inspired circus melodies of Baaba.

Also influential was the *yass* movement of the early '90s, which drew on Poland's jazz roots but took a middle-finger approach to tradition. Incorporating the swanky horn melodies but breaking all the rules, *yass* decided that it was now all right to scream nonsense and bring theatrics and satire into improv jazz performances. Groups like Miosc and Mazzoll & Ahythmic Perfection were basically Miles Davis meets the Dead Kennedys, successfully injecting punk-rock attitude into avant-garde jazz. Sampling madman m.bunio.s, who plays alongside Moretti in the improv jazz/hip-hop project Bassisters Orchestra, points out that "there is still huge respect for

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AFRICA RAPS BACK

Daara J returns hip-hop to the real source.

Words: Eric K. Arnold

With all the talk about globalization these days, it's easy to overlook one of its most positive aspects: the outsourcing of hip-hop to other countries, especially those within the African diaspora.

The global hip-hop movement—much more visible internationally than it is in America—has not only proven that the culture itself is universal, but it now stands at the point where it threatens to make Western rap all but irrelevant in terms of innovation.

Daara J is a good case in point. Superstars in Senegal (which makes them stars in Paris and all the French-speaking African nations as well), they've just released an album, *Boomerang*, which could do for global hip-hop what the Fugees did for mainstream hip-hop state-side. Most noticeably present is the degree of cultural authenticity with which they interpolate the artform, while adding touches of reggae, R&B, *mbalax*, Afrobeat and Wolof rhythms. Their sound, while slicker than that of a purely traditional African group, is far from lightweight world-pop—although it's accessible enough for dancefloors from Paris to Dakar.

Mixing the traditional with the urban, with often-provocative lyrics that assert the young generation's struggle for self-sufficiency, Daara J has redefined conscious hip-hop in Africanized terms, which isn't so much "futuristic" as it is "right here, right now, forever." But then, what else would you expect coming from the land of the OGs—that is, Original Griots?

XLR8R recently caught up with Daara J MC Faada Freddy, who's been quite busy shuttling between Poland and England, in the midst of a well-received international tour (which takes the group to the US in 2005). Freddy's articulate and insightful responses left no doubt that rap music has indeed come full circle from its deep-rooted cultural origins in the African oral tradition thousands of years ago.

"African hip-hop is booming for different reasons," Freddy explains. "I think the first reason is that the Africans themselves are inspired towards that music. In Africa, we used to say that rap music

has (already) been mastered in Africa. Different local musics, such as *tasso*, *kebesso*, and *basso*, which are from the oral tradition, are very comparable to hip-hop. That's why all the youth really feel like it's their own music."

According to Faada Freddy, rap really started back in the day—way, way back in the day—in the era of the Songhai realm, and along the historic trade route that connected West Africa culturally and socially (before European intervention). It was along these paths, he says, that the griots traveled, spreading culture throughout the region with word, sound and movement arts. "The griots used to go from one country to another, just like a musician going on tour," he says. "You can identify the rapper just like a modern griot. A rapper is going from corner to corner and he has the same language—the language of the rhymes, and the language of bringing out the truth and exposing it to people, just reflecting the reality."

The album's title, for instance, reflects the reality of the griot's evolution. "As I told you, we believe that rap music was born in Africa," Freddy reiterates. "Because if the new Afro-Americans are doing rap music, it's because there is a story, there is a history before it...you might forget some parts of your roots, but you can still have some part of your culture, just some instinctive reflection." Rap music, therefore, "is another kind of griotism" for Freddy and, by extension, all MCs from the West African region. To them, hip-hop means much more than the shallow representations of materialistic values pimped to Western consumers by what Daara J calls "Babylone."

"It's not only about bling-bling and stuff, and disrespect and stuff like that," Freddy says. "It's for us another way to get out of misery. To get the people informed about the political area, or many other areas that the Africans are so far ignorant to. Hip-hop has another image. It's really spiritual and political music that helps the people really get through."

From the perspective of an African rapper, hip-hop is civilization unto itself. "Before the slavery era, we had that oral tradition in Africa that used to be developed by the griots," Freddy continues. "That's why we finally concluded that it was just like a slumbering African art; one day, it exploded to go all over the world and come back to Africa. So it's like a boomerang that you throw away, and it bends around the world to come back to Africa."

Daara J's *Boomerang* is out now. www.wrasserecords.com.

"We believe that rap music was born in Africa."



FROM A TO ZENITH

Far Out fusioners Azymuth are Rio's oldest musical renegades.

Words: Paul Sullivan



Brazilian stalwarts Azymuth's career spans not one, not two, but three glorious decades...and counting.

During their lengthy musical career the veteran trio (Ivan Conti, José Roberto Bertrami and Alex Malheiros) have worked with the likes of Stevie Wonder and Chick Corea, and drummed up a number of hits that jazz-funk aficionados will salute immediately—"Linha do Horizonte," "Jazz Carnival" and "Meio da Cuica" among them.

Perhaps Azymuth's most remarkable achievement though, is the way in which they have kept their sound so current. Steeped in a world of '70s Brazilian jazz, funk, soul and bossa it may be, but constant refinement (and re-definement) has ensured that the band remains relevant to modern audiences.

"Brazilian music now is so eclectic," generalizes Ivan Conti, the drummer/percussionist and general spokesperson for the band. "But our

kind of music has great repercussions with young people. One of our main goals has always been to search for and create new ideas for new songs but without forgetting our roots."

Throughout the last decade or so, Brazil's electronic cognoscenti—led by the likes of DJ Marky, Patife, Fernanda Porto, XRS Land, Camilo Rocha, Mau Mau and others—as well as the mangue beat scene in the North-East (Nacao Zumbie, DJ Dolores, Otto etc.) has diverted younger audiences away from the more mainstream MPB (popular Brazilian music) and into clubs and festivals. Thanks largely to the influence of Far Out boss/producer Joe Davis (and his cohort Roc Hunter), Azymuth has been able to massage their essentially old school sound to fit snugly into the digital era.

Brazilian Soul, their latest offering via UK Brazilophile label Far Out, is a case in point, effortlessly entwining the group's famous grooves with a contemporary dancefloor sensibility. The first single from the album offers an Azymuth double whammy: on one side, the languorous

samba of "Biaozinho Carioca," on the other, the sonorous disco-funk of "O Lance." These tunes will undoubtedly appeal to the group's modern audience—the broken beat fans—as will other tunes on the LP, such as "Depose De Carnival" (with Fabiola) and "Sao Pedro."

"[This album is] a great 30-year anniversary gift," says Conti. "Joe (Davis) brought in ideas for the collaborations on the LP and also ideas for remixes. We feel it's a good chance to enjoy our own musical thoughts and feelings as well as share them with other musicians and DJs around the world."

Though defiantly modern in many places, *Brazilian Soul* carries echoes of Rio's "Beco das Garrafas" ("bottle lane")—the run of music venues near Copacabana Beach that famously got its nickname when disgruntled residents started to throw bottles at the noise that went on until all hours. It's not quite another *Light As A Feather* (their 1978 classic), but it is a fantastic return to form. A band able to hold their own for so long must surely have some advice to aspiring musicians today? "Play your instrument," says Conti, "with love, heart and solidarity."

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Reggaeton, Spanish dancehall-hip-hop, is ready to rumble on the charts.

Words: Sarah Bentley



▲ Ivy Queen

As dancehall fever sweeps across the US and Europe, a hybrid sound from South America known as reggaeton has made its way onto NY's radio airwaves and most discerning dancefloors.

Riding relentless electronic, booty-popping riddims (imagine Chakademus & Pliers' "Murder She Wrote" riddim mixed with Colombian cumbia), reggaeton artists spit lyrics in Spanish Creole, their rhetoric ranging from good time sex, weed and party vibes to social commentary about life in their country's hardcore favelas.

Pushing the sound in New York are a pool of mixtape and club DJs including DJ Cassanova, DJ Al Money and Alex Sensation. Their consistent work in bringing the music to the masses has resulted in English-speaking station Hot 97 adding a weekly reggaeton show to their schedule. Further stamping reggaeton's leap from underground music to mainstream party soundtrack was Puerto Rican reggaeton artist Ivy Queen's appearance on the WB Network in June to discuss the roots of the sound and how she became its leading female figure. Of the program, Ivy enthused, "After being underground for 10 years, it's amazing to appear on WB. Everyone might not be able to understand the lyrics but they feel the vibe that's more powerful than the words themselves."

Reggaeton first emerged in the early 1990s from Panama, with artist El General becoming the most prolific in the scene's early days. Current reggaeton big man, deejay Tego Calderon, explains that people didn't always show the genre the love it now enjoys. "Personally, I thought it was fake," he says. "Puerto Ricans emulating Jamaicans—the flow, the accent—that didn't seem real. I wanted

to do hip-hop. But then it evolved into a sound of our own. The roots are in dancehall reggae but now the interpretation is uniquely ours with salsa, bomba, and hip-hop—all the Latin flavors mixed up together with a tropical influence. That's what I did to reggaeton. I can't be Bob Marley. I'm Tego Calderon. I have to be myself."

So how does a man go from being down on a genre to being its leading male artist? "The dances were similar to having sex," Calderon explains. "That's why it got so popular. You'd dance with seven different girls in one night. I had the time of my life at my first reggaeton dance. That's why I fell in love with it and started doing it."

So now that reggaeton has the ear of the US's cultural capital, where does Calderon think the style going from here? "It will get a lot bigger," he enthuses. "50 Cent requested I appear on stage with him and Ivy Queen has already collaborated with Wyclef. We're getting mad vibes not just from the boricuas and Latinos in NYC, but all their friends too. They ask what the lyrics mean and to them it's exciting and new and that buzz is going to spread across the world."

Ivy Queen's album *Diva—Platinum Edition* is out now on Perfect Image Records. For more on Tego Calderon go to futuroe3.com/tego or www.tegocalderon.com. For all things PR visit www.musicofpuertorico.com.

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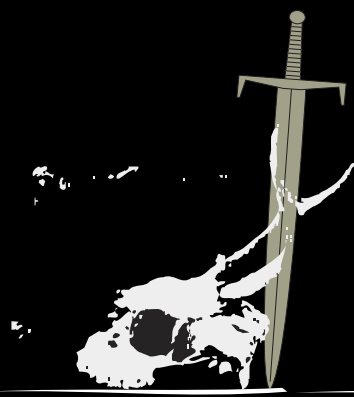

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Styling by Desiree Zondag
Make-up by Jillian Chaitin for Tarte
Hair by Joshua Raine
Title design by Surface to Air
Models: Sheila and Viliana at ID Models
Shot at Freeman's, NYC





previous page

Sheila: Betsey Johnson cape; Norma Kamali dress; skull stylist's own

these pages

Sheila: Eventide overalls; Oliva Marino shirt

Viliana: Eventide jacket, jumpsuit and neck piece



this page

Viliana: vintage jacket and neckties from Screaming Mimi's; Adolfo pants

next page

Sheila: Eventide necktie; vintage shirt and skirt from Aardvarks

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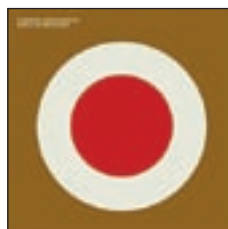
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▲ DJ/Rupture

On his cult-favorite DJ mixes *Gold Teeth Thief* and *Minesweeper Suite*, Jace Clayton (alias DJ/Rupture) used three turntables to connect the scribbled dots between Trenchtown-riot dancehall, R&B mating calls and cathartic industrial noise. His first artist album, *Special Gunpowder*, further summons a carnival in the streets, plunging headlong into the sort of multiculturalism that inspires white flight. Safe and quaint pageants of folk "costumes" and "exotic" foods find no place here—this is a Babel where multi-ethnic ideas foster confusion, then hesitant conservatism, and finally tolerance.

The bullet-shaped watermelons adorning *Special's* album cover indicate that Clayton is taking bodies this time, as he fires the fruit's racist connotations back at the colonists. The music fleshes out the image of block parties while Babylon burns. Now employing live vocalists and instruments without any 1's and 2's. Clayton gives a compelling narration of life in a smoldering empire. His mixes of ragga, hip-hop, breakcore and moonless jazz all convey a sense that harmonious freedom risks discord or thudding disappointment at any moment. As guest MC Arnaud Michniak

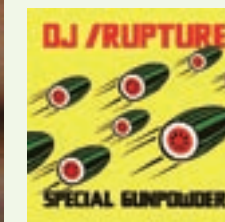
puts it (in French), "*Here is the sound whose legs and arms have been cut off...It's the sound of the intelligence in the airwaves/A formal notice to understand and change the world.*"

"Overture: Watermelon City" sets the template as poet Elizabeth Alexander dead-pans greetings to the junkies and world saviors she sees everyday on the street. Sparse ragga beats and saxophones punctuate her words like looters knocking on doors. "*Philadelphia is burning and watermelon is all that can cool it,*" she declares, observing that white racism has now lost its power. On the following dancehall-crunk number, "Little More Oil," toaster Sister Nancy joyfully beckons Jah to keep the fires burning.

Throughout *Special*, every moment of ecstasy is tinged with raw nerve and disarray; "Leech Wisdom" entrances with North African rhythms that digitally evaporate, while "Osaka-Ku Memory Depot" does likewise with guitar fragments. "Bonechip" is a coagulated mess with King Honey scurrying about. Dub-blues number "Lonesome Side" evokes a life-goes-on sigh as crooner Lily loses count of her roadhouse Romeos.

ALBUM REVIEWS 12.04

DJ/RUPTURE
SPECIAL GUNPOWDER
Tigerbeat6/US/CD



The sounds of ex-warriors chasing ghosts through the streets are heard on toaster Wayne Lonesome's chained dog soliloquy in "Dem Nuh Know Me," and in the bit-tongue of Oxbow's Eugene Robinson in "The Book That Can't Be Opened at Either End."

Despite its great narrative, *Special* has its share of misfires. "No Heathen" is a sluggish ragga-core throwaway, and so is "Flop We." "Can't Stop It" is terribly outta place with its frat-folk guitar and Starbucks Muzak beats, as Max Turner gives "shit happens" bits of wisdom between sips of Bud Light. Turner also leads escapism into the album's end, making it seem like all that's left is nostalgia after the revolution has ended. Sindhu Zagoren's banjo tune, "Leaves," recalls simpler times, as does its successor, the Appalachian folk ballad "Mole In the Ground."

But after so much revolt, Clayton can only shovel the ashes. *Cameron Macdonald*

7-HURTZ ELECTROLEUM
Output/UK/CD

Together as 7-Hurtz, Brand New Heavies founder Lascelles Gordon and Ben Cowan, a touring member of Sparks, are making some of the UK's most addictively catchy electronic music. The pair may describe their John Carpenter-inspired melodic loops as dark but *Electroleum* actually breathes with life. Sneaking live bass and guitar into the mix on tracks like "3 Sisters," their second LP at times travels similar terrain as New York's Out Hud. Cowan, a former member of several contemporary dance outfits, and Gordon, a session percussionist who most recently contributed to Beth Orton's last album, both bring enough influences to keep *Electroleum* a far cry from typically derivative contemporary electro. *Jeoee Serwer*

808 STATE PREBUILD
Rephlex/UK/CD

It's understandable, yet somewhat ironic, to hear Graham Massey dismiss his early work with 808

State. Understandable, because the band's early work is clearly a response to mid/late '80s Trax acid and for him, it doesn't represent the group coming into its own. Ironic because this early incarnation of the group—including (A Guy Called) Gerald Simpson—made far superior and more innovative music in that period than in their later, club-topping era. Dug up from the vaults, this pre-*Newbuild* material reveals a group limited by equipment and all the better for it. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

AMMONCONTACT
ONE IN AN INFINITY OF WAYS
Plug Research/US/CD

The whole left-of-center instrumental hip-hop game is more overcrowded than the left-of-center music magazine game, so when you find something good, you might choke on a bite of burrito or pee in your pants a little. That's the case (I mean, not with me, but you know...) with Ammoncontacts' debut long-player. Chopped beats give way to flowing instrumental freak-outs yet the album's incredibly consistent pace

and sparing use of MCs separates it from the rest of the pack. It's refreshing to hear producers who aren't trying to be too clever, yet still maintain the raw funkiness of their vinyl-only influences. *Stephen Christian*

AZYMUTH BRAZILIAN SOUL
Far Out/UK/CD

Azymuth celebrates their 30th anniversary with plenty of laid-back South American grooves, as the album's title implies. It's silkier and sexier than most things that fall under the "smooth jazz" banner, but then again, there's a fine line between globally-oriented dance music, Latin jazz-funk fusion and leisure suit lounge material. Most often, these paths cross under the heading of downtempo, but on *Brazilian Soul*, Azymuth proves as adept at raising the pulse with fever-inducing dancefloor workouts as they are at mellowing out the mood to tropical chill status. Guest appearances by Fabiola, Ze Carlos, Emilio Santiago and a hint of vocoded vocals add contemporary appeal—not that this classic Brazilian trio needed it. *Eric K. Arnold*

JUSTIN BERKOVI PASSION
Predicaments-Music Man/BEL/CD

If there was one tiny criticism about British producer Justin Berkovi's techno music, it would be that his techno pieces are just a tad bit monotonous in song structure. That being said, Berkovi's newest full-length *Passion* delivers his usual hypnotizing Berkovi fare: tight minimal lines cut freely with off-kilter chords and warped noises, rendering these tracks excellent choices for unpredictable dancefloor mixing. *Passion* swiftly hurtles through different moods, from the chiming melodic notes on the gorgeous "Mount Zero" to the dark, doomsday-sounding backdrop of "No Tomorrow," which could be the score to some ultra-violent video game. *Janet Tzou*

BLU TRIBUNL
Inflatabl/US/CD

The follow-up to 2003's dub *tribunL*, *blu tribunL* finds idiosyncratically excellent producers Akufen, Freeform and Rip Off Artist modernizing one of the most tradition-entrenched genres—the blues. Each artist deconstructs venerable songs into Cubist mutations that will horrify purists (in the unlikely event they ever hear this disc). *blu tribunL*'s frissons spring from the novel incongruity of Mississippi Delta mud mingling with clicks 'n' cuts jaggedness and getting atomized by antiseptic DSP. Ironically, Akufen, Freeform and Rip Off Artist's irreverence toward the blues actually revitalizes electronic music, and unexpectedly reveals the blues as a rich springboard for musical innovation. *Dave Segal*

BUTTI 49 HABIT
Exceptional/UK/CD

Viking power! This Norwegian duo of producer/DJ Snorre Sneim and multi-instrumentalist Oyvind Jacobson has been conquering dancefloors around the world with a string of releases for labels like Guidance and remixes for Kyoto Jazz Massive. On their first full-length, the pair truly shines, with impeccable instrumentation and tasty collaborations with vocalists including Maiya James. Sporting broken beats that sparkle with incredibly tight programming (check the brush work on "Hustle on the Vessel" or the Afrobeat breaks on "Kongo Mongo") and jazz interludes that never feel forced, Butti 49 serves up a classy debut from the land of horned hats. *Peter Nicholson*

COBRA KILLER 76/77
Monika/GER/CD

No Jane-come-latelies, Gina V. D'Orio and Annika Line Trost were fusing performance with rock-inspired electro when Peaches was still something you looked for in the produce section. On their third album, the duo's go-go grrlgroup antics continue as they glue the dirty '60s riffology of The Monks and The Shangri Las with DAF and their Digital Hardcore roots, courtesy of production help from T. Raumschmiere, Thomas Fehlmann and Eric D. Clark. The result, besides being

a fantastically voluptuous romp that updates *Beyond The Valley of the Dolls*, reveals just where Kathleen Hanna's Julie Ruin and Le Tigre may have learned more than a few tricks. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

ROY DAVIS JR. CHICAGO FOREVER
Ubiquity/US/CD
ROY DAVIS JR. WATER FOR THIRSTY CHILDREN
Nice + Smooth/CAN/CD

It's difficult to mention house music without discussing Chicago native Roy Davis Jr. His production work with DJ Pierre as Phuture laid the foundation for Chicago house. After a veteran career, Davis remains one of the only artists determined to preserve the soulful nature of house music's sound. *Chicago Forever* offers classic Davis stylings: His 4/4 stomper "My Soul Is Electric" plows onto the dancefloor with strumming electronic strings and a male vocal overlay. Those in a mellow mood should check Davis' downtempo full-length *Water For Thirsty Children*, which steps easily into warm hip-hop nostalgia ("The Way We Were"), funky disco riffs ("Dance Shake"), and deep house that sounds looted from the archives of the ever-legendary, now-defunct Strictly Rhythm label ("Soldiers Listen"). *Janet Tzou*

DECLAIME CONVERSATIONS WITH DUDLEY
Up Above/US/CD

Like the title says, this Lootpack rapper's über-personal, linear style is truly on some *kaffeeklatsch* ish. Luckily, Declaime is a slack-voiced, likeable man who won't preach or whine—and when he cracks open the memoirs of the "Pain" chapter, he gets his best tracks, whether lamenting his daughter's estrangement on the gut-wrenching "Dearest Desire" or advising baby-daddies on "Neverending Remix" ("How we gonna grow soldiers/if we ain't there to grow the soldiers?"). Madlib's beats crank up like a janky escalator while OhNo keeps the kvetching vibe alive on laidback West Coast styles. And riffing the "Chim Chim Chiree" melody ("Knowledge Born") is just gangsta. *Julianne Shepherd*

DJ? ACUCRACK MAKO VS. GEIST
Cracknation/US/CD

The Chicago duo has dipped into other genres before, but this album's straight up hard and dark drum & bass. It's well done tech-step, heavy on the vocals, but avoiding some common pitfalls—for instance, when the MC on opener "Damage Report" knows when to shut the hell up. There are brief flirtations with ambient, as on the intro to "Chronic Suspension," but Acucrack always makes their way back (pretty quickly) to the aggro style that dominates the disc. This artist album is cleanly mixed and well-paced. Whether Acucrack's gained from focusing more tightly, or lost by becoming too narrow, is a toss up. *Luciana Lopez*

DOSH PURE TRASH
Anticon/US/CD

Pure Trash is an enhanced glance into the home life of Martin Dosh. His basement recordings capture the excitement of building a bright brood. Parenting young can be as experimental a process as the most adventurous music making and it sounds like Martin is having fun with both. Playful, piano melodies skip rope with smiling xylophone and shaky snares while conversation snippets and glitchy bits keep it flipped. Dosh is crossbreeding with a creative collective: Andrew Broder, Jel, Odd Nosdam and DJ Celine Dijon make for fine offspring. *Pure Trash* is a splendid ode to staying home. *Frosty*

DUB-L DAY OF THE MEGA BEAST
Day By Day/UK/CD

Best known for his work with DJ JS-1 (the Ground Original and Claimstake comps), and Aesop Rock (he produced *Music For Earthworms*), dub-L is clearly a beat-man on the rise. On this record, he hooks up with a vast assortment of NYC indie all-stars, including C-Rayz Walz on the apocalyptic "Deep Impact," GM Grimm for the bounce-driven "The Life I Lead," and O.G. Percee-P on the hard-knock tale "Ghetto Rhyme Story." Some of the lesser-known emcees fail to impress, but Ls tracks, mostly of the sparse drums/weird keyboards variety, hold things together well. *Brolin Winning*

DUB TRIO EXPLORING THE DANGERS OF ROIR/US/CD

Using bass, drums, keys, guitar, melodica and distorted effects, Brooklyn's The Dub Trio creates a parallel universe of head-tripping sonics and itchy good grooves. With some tracks recorded live in a local Brooklyn watering hole, *Exploring the Dangers Of* mines fresh scenarios of dizzy dub, post rock and neo-funk terrain, the focus constantly changing while retaining the trio's bowel smacking attack. Much credit goes to drummer Joe Tomino, whose assortment of freak percussion adds exotic flourishes to his diverse and zesty rhythms. Part dub danger, part psychedelic madlib, *Exploring* is outstanding. *Ken Micallef*



BOOKA SHADE

BOOKA SHADE MEMENTO
Get Physical/GER/CD

Walter Merziger and Arno Kammermeier are the most important members of Get Physical's elctro-house loving family, as they produce the label's other acts. But their debut album as Booka Shade offers much more than just low slung club tracks. In fact, it seems that the duo never really put their past behind them. On *Memento*, their synth pop and trance backgrounds are still evident, barely audible through hissing textures and metallic funk. On recent single "Vertigo," plaintive Kraftwerkian melodies are set to a perfectly weighted, intricate rhythm, while only stony hearts won't be seduced by the tragi-comic, vocodered vocals of "On & On." That's not to suggest that Booka Shade is merely minimalist synth pastiche; the bleakly hypnotic "S.T.A.R.R.Z" and "Cha" make forceful points to the contrary. This album is Booka Shade's memento of past times, immaculately re-interpreted with the benefit of modern studio precision. *Richard Brophy*

ENCRE FLUX
Clapping Music/FRA/CD

A startling amalgam of disparate influences, this gripping work of cerebellum-burrowing brilliance drafts the visceral potency and poetry of the orchestra onto a shrewdly conceived post-rock frame. *Flux*'s power defies description, existing in its own careful parallel universe where rivers flow upstream and grand pianos mark every street corner. Perhaps it's the furiously perfect drums, the cello gauges, the ramshackled enveloping instrumentation or the breathy French vocals. Perhaps it's all this, and a whole lot more. *Brian Paul*

ADRIANA EVANS NOMADIC
Next Thing/US/CD

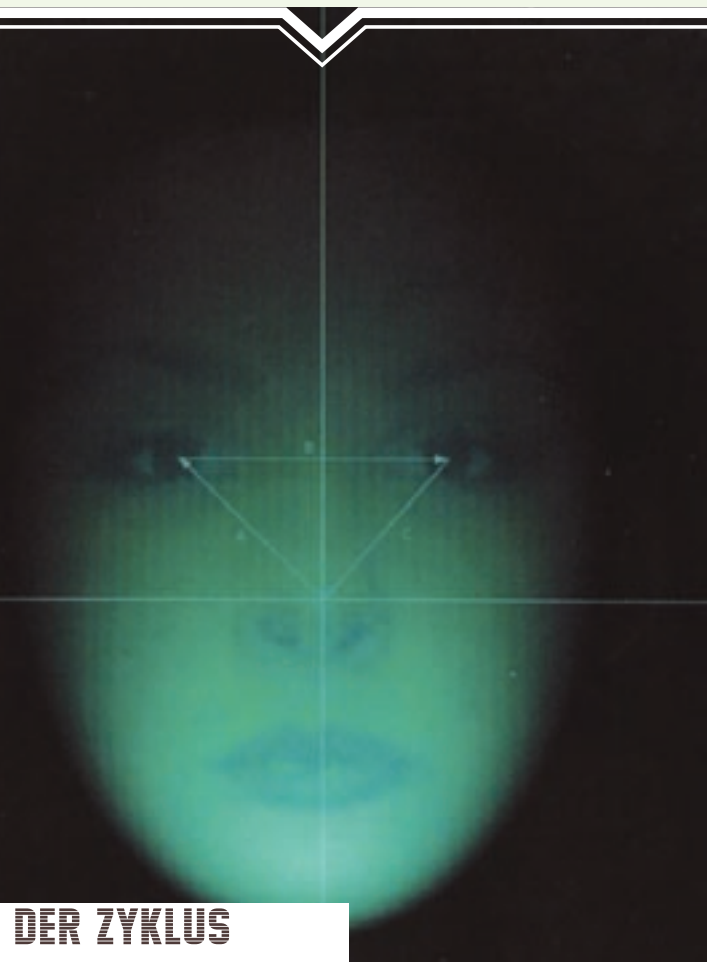
Mmm. This is an album that speaks like a loved one's warm embrace—a timeless collection from a seasoned vocalist and her savvy producer and longtime collaborator Dred Scott. Evans channels jazz on "Morning Light," rock on the cover "What It Is" and pure soul music on her ode to song, "I Hear Music." Hints of Afro-Cuban rhythms are at ease with a chorus of synthesizers matching her perfect pitch. *Tamara Warren*

THE FLESH
Gern Blandsten/US/CD

This is the album that those ska kids Madness ("Our House") coulda shoulda made: playful and sultry and lustily morbid. Dramatic and spitting, lead singer Nat Halpern's vocals leap all over the octaves, moving nimbly from shout to sly lick and back again. The Flesh has an archness in them, a knowing in-on-the-joke wink even as they get all anthemic on your ass. Part karaoke-ready, part darkwave rock operatic. This is a cool-as-shit cannonball of an album—big and bold and splashy. *Selena Hou*

GAVIN FROOME UNDERGROUND HEROES
Nordic Trax/CAN/CD

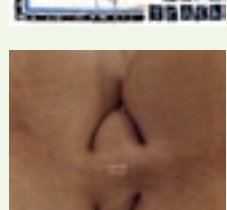
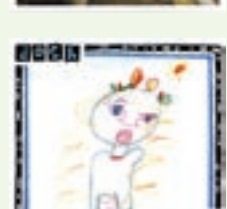
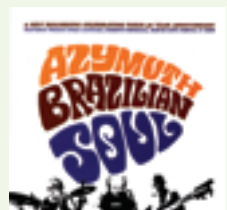
Froome's Vancouver roots show on this album, which, like his city, blends influences from around the world. Largely pitched at that delicate point between lounging and dancing, Froome's third album is consistently excellent, without getting overly consistent. Take "All Night," a slowed-down groove that seems paced to take you to dawn, sandwiched between the joyful "Get Up," with its dancefloor urgings, and "Southie," with its fantastic organ and percussion. But the disc



DER ZYKLUS

DER ZYKLUS BIOMETRIC I.D.
Dub/NETH/CD

The absolutely terrifying digitally shredded and reverbed spooks, leering oscillated moans and echoing harps of *Biometric I.D.*'s ambient openers announce upfront that this project from Dopplereffekt's Heinrich Mueller is something different, shifting his focus away from his trademark taut electro bounce to this sci-fi thriller soundtrack. Five unsettling songs into the record, some semblance of dancefloor concerns arise in an excellent fit of loping, hiccupping Autechre drum patterns. It's only a mid-way resting point before Mr. Mueller confidently continues his nightmarish soundscape of desolate technology and claustrophobic synthesis. *Biometric I.D.* serves as a potent warning bell of a sinister cyber-future ahead. *Brian Paul*



has other surprises, as well, from the funky to the deep—something few other artists manage to pull off. *Luciana Lopez*

DANIEL GIVENS DAYCLEAR & FIRST DARK Aesthetics/US/CD

Question marks fill the sky. *Dayclear & First Dark* is intense, apocalyptic angst and twisting tension unfolded for all to see. Mr. Givens lays open his heart to work it out in real-time. His words may not have the explosive weight of stronger scribes Saul Williams or Mike Ladd, but he makes up for it with a magnetic, murky, musical landscape. In fact, the instrumental aspects stand tallest. These are shadow songs, yet through the dimness pokes a positive strain. Daniel Givens is an optimist sure of survival. *Dayclear & First Dark* shines with his brave spirit. *Frothy*

HAIKU D'ETAT Project Blowed/US/CD

LA underground poet laureates Aceyalone, Mikah 9 and Abstract Rude rise to the surface like ancient prophets from another time, on yet another mission to raise hip-hop's lyrical level—and its consciousness. "On the m-m-microphona, no more my sharon," Mikah 9 spits on "Mike Aaron & Eddie," the opening track, which introduces the three personalities and sets the album's tone with its polyphonic vocal tones. The hepcat slang-fest "Kats" segues naturally into "Dogs," which spotlights the g-funked-up side of Haiku (thought you knew, fool). All that jazz poetry is indeed all that—we're talking slapped-silly acoustic

basslines wrapped around murderous vocal riffs, tight concepts, and an overall artistic vision that makes this the most focused Fellowship/Project Blowed-affiliated release since *Inner City Griots*. Don't sleep, peep game. *Eric K. Arnold*

HANDSOME BOY MODELING SCHOOL

WHITE PEOPLE Elektra/US/CD

A follow-up to Dan the Automator and Prince Paul's genre-bending 1999 opus of *Get A Life*-inspired humor, *So...* *How's Your Girl, White People* marks the return of these eclectic producers' martini-sipping alter egos Chest Rockwell and Nathaniel Merriweather. Typified by creative guest pairings ("The World's Gone Mad" features Barrington Levy, Del Tha Funkee Homosapien and Franz Ferdinand frontman Alex Kapranos; Mars Volta are paired with AG and THE RZA, while Cat Power, Black Sheep's Dres and, yes, John Oates all make appearances), *White People* is typical Automator and Paul: entirely without focus, but with creative, quickly-abandoned ideas bouncing all over. *Jesse Serwer*

ROBERT HENKE SIGNAL TO NOISE Imbalance Computer Music/GER/CD

Inspired by a photo he took of Joshua Tree National Park prior to a thunderstorm, Berlin-based producer Robert Henke (Monolake) has conjured another disc of monumentally beatless music. *Signal To Noise* will appeal to those into Monolake's *Gobi. The Desert* EP, a vast, elemental vista of becalming and vaguely

sinister ambience. *Signal To Noise's* slowly evolving, vastly spacious soundscapes possess a holy aura and that quality which marks the best ambient music: Its ability to evoke the wonders of nature without getting Hallmark card sappy about it. The music's subtlety and power point to a master producer/sound designer at the controls. *Dave Segal*

IQU SUN Q Sonic Boom/US/CD

IQU's first proper album since 1998's *Chotto Matte A Moment!* is a glossy party opus brimming with Asian-American soul, lubricated disco-funk and mellifluous melodies. *Sun Q's* production (by IQU's Michiko Swiggs and Kento Oiwa, along with Brian Weber) is phenomenally vibrant and full-bodied. IQU's multi-instrumentalists are hedonists with masterly chops and ears keenly attuned to the cheeky and the weird. From the heart-stoppingly beautiful, Theremin-dominated cover of Minnie Riperton's 1974 hit "Loving You" to the punchy, staccato funk (with distorted guitar and psychedelic keyboard whorls) of "Hamachi," IQU proves that passion for the past can manifest magnificently timeless music. *Dave Segal*

I-WOLF I-WOLF AND BURDY MEET THE BABYLONIANS Klein/AUS/CD

I-Wolf and Burdy didn't just eat a canary, they've swallowed a whole avian dub dance party. *Meet the Babylonians* squawks like a chicken coop sound-clash. It trills and quacks and warbles across the murky downbeats; under Joice Muniz' voice on "Um Prazer" you can practically hear the funky coo of a doo-wop dove. Animal and eclectic, I-Wolf (of Vienna's Sofa Surfers) and Burdy (of the UK's Baby Mammoth) have assembled an album of perky, strutting and warped-to-high-hell reggae complete with the oddest twists, including some Phillip Glass-like chimes and a smattering of languages from around the world. This polyglot does the funkier chicken on the block. *Selena Hou*

JAZZINHO Ecco Chamber/AUS/CD DOMINICO+2 SINCERELY HOT Luaka Bop/US/CD

Are we over Brazilian music yet? Didn't think so. Equal parts bossanova and Jazzanova, Jazzinho is 21st century Latin lounge music—by way of Vienna—elevated to ecstatic heights by the voice of singer Guida de Palma and some ultra-jazzy arrangements (think Sergio Mendes minus the cheese factor). It might inspire you to take up salsa, tango and samba lessons to accompany your ever-present mojito. Dominoco + 2 is far less highbrow in its aspirations, yet no less fervent in its commitment to body-moving rhythms (even if its vibe is closer to Brazilerio new wave/punk than classic tropicalismo). If you like to rock your trucker hat with guayabera shirts, you'll flip over the combination of garage-y electro beats and Portuguese lyrics. *Eric K. Arnold*

CHRIS JOSS YOU'VE BEEN SPIKED ESL/US/CD

Someday ESL will release a speed metal album and surprise everyone. This is not that album. Instead, Joss sticks with the lounge-tastic, retro sound that the label's consistently put out. Think astronauts in suits and skinny ties, surrounded by Martian babes in '70s bikinis, all sipping top-shelf martinis, and you'll get the vibe here. From the first fat notes of bass, soon joined by an organ that could have come straight from a Ray Charles outtake in *Blues Brothers* and wah wah guitars that would give Ron Jeremy flashbacks, Frenchman Joss settles in for a long, deep groove. *Luciana Lopez*

SEBASTIAN KRAMER PRINCIPLES & TACTICS Pure Plastic/UK/CD

The East German techno wiz kid likes it dark and heavy. After only a handful of 12" releases, Sebastian

Kramer unloads a whopping 60 minutes of mechanical repetition and four-to-the-floor hypnosis on Mark Broom's Pure Plastic label. Keenly inspired from the Detroit sound, each droning track drives through sparse stringy synth pads and relentlessly heady, borderline tribal-y percussion—ranging from drum-laden walls of bass to loopy, shuffly big-room techno. Even though the three closing bonus tracks (not included on the vinyl version) offer a deeper and more leftfield touch, *Principles* is merely for the gung-ho techno DJ. *Sean O'Neal*

LADY SAW STRIP TEASE VP/US/CD

If you're looking for Lady Saw's trademark slackness, *Strip Tease* won't disappoint. Ms. Saw gets raw over some of the hottest riddims out, like Thrilla ("Loser" with Ce'Cile), Scoobay ("Lock It Up") and Trifecta ("Pretty Pussy"), but she shines brightest on the heavily vocoded "Dreaming Of You." She's low on metaphors and high on shock value, taking the power back from her male counterparts by force. But she's also the same artist who had a country hit ("Gimme The Reason") and shows that soft side on "Dedicated To Mama." Somehow, she manages to be rough *and* smooth without losing an ounce of strength—the true test of her skill. *Ross Hogg*

LADYMAN VIAGRA OPUS The Agriculture/US/CD

Ladyman, ostensibly, is the sleazier side of Raz Mesinai, better known for crossbreeding dub rhythms with traditional Middle Eastern folk music as Badawi and as one-half of early '90s NYC dub deconstructionists Sub Dub. While there are some airs of parody and cheekiness running through *Viagra Opus* ("Old Spice" is my favorite track title), tracks like "Infomercial" and "Feeely Hard" are no less dark than Mesinai's work with Sub Dub. The tracks are all good in and of themselves, especially dancehall-flavored ones like "Steppin' Lady Style," but when it's all done, you're still left wondering what exactly the story is behind this Viagra opus. *Jesse Serwer*

BILL LASWELL VERSION 2 VERSION—A DUB TRANSMISSION RoIR/US/CD

Bassist/producer Bill Laswell's fifth installment of Roir Dub Sessions continues his habit of creating interchangeable but penetratingly devious dub. The fact that this sounds like a lot of previous works doesn't quell its beauty; few beyond Lee Perry and King Tubby have evolved the genre, but Laswell does here with trademarked ease. The deep puncture of "Dystopia" and casual swing on "Night City" keep Babylon a volume control's flick away. Joined by world class musicians (Jah Wobble, Karsh Kale, Bernie Worrell, Abdou Mbdoup), this transmission has been received, implemented and accepted. *Derek Berze*

LE TIGRE THIS ISLAND Universal/US/CD

Yes, the once fiercely independent Le Tigre has signed to a major label; and it's true that *This Island* is a naive-sounding record, full of electronic gimmicks and simplistic, often childlike, sing-song lyrics. But it's also one of the most easily digestible political records of the year, transmitting anti-war, pro-queer visibility and feminist messages to a mostly young, mostly female audience who value a fun dance party more than they care about production prowess or the progenitors of the style (Public Enemy, Atari Teenage Riot). This is slumber party mutiny music—the shinier, happier, techno-fied version of the riot grrrl revolution leader Kathleen Hanna originally started with Bikini Kill. And *This Island* has its moments, notably the Nintendo soundclash of rave-meets-Sex Pistols anthem "Seconds," the fierce bounce-happy electro of "After Dark" and a glittering freestyle cover of the Pointer Sisters' "I'm So Excited." Don't hate, demonstrate. *Vivian Hoot*

LES GEORGES LENINGRAD SUR LES TRACES DE BLACK ESKIMO LESBIANS ON ECSTASY Alien8/CAN/CD

With Kathleen Hanna's four-track punktronica project Julie Ruin, Lilliput and obscure DC teen-punkers Meltdown as their forebears, vanguard Montreal punks Les Georges Leningrad and Lesbians on Ecstasy sound like they actually paid attention in art school, but still work for revolution out of their basements. LoE's lesbo manifestos are purred eerily, distant sing-speak over gritty Octapad beats; their debut could almost be a collection of lost electro-sex anthems of the early '80s, a spacey counterpart to Sexual Harrassment's electro classic "I Need a Freak." Thrilling collage-punks Les Georges Leningrad's second release is less one member, but still rides on its secret weapon: vowelly

vocalist Poney P's deeply weird yawls, all dank synths and jutty guitars—dark, but never boggy. *Julianne Shepherd*

LITTLE AXE CHAMPAGNE & GRITS Real World/US/CD

Skip McDonald paid his dues long ago. The Sugarhill Gang guitarist helped define hip-hop on classics like "The Message" and "Rapper's Delight." A decade back he headed to the blues, linking with On-U producer extraordinaire Adrian Sherwood to explore the dub side of soul. His fourth such project, *Champagne & Grits*, is the least Jamaicanized, most song-based record yet. Guests Junior Delgado and Ghetto Priest add a bit of island life to McDonald's emotive guitar, but when Massive Attack vocalist Shara Nelson begs you to "Say My Name," you'll truly know what longing is all about. *Derek Berze*

LOSOU GETTING EVEN Playhouse/GER/CD

Losoul's *Belong* (2000) is one of the most auspicious experimental tech-house debut albums ever. It's unsurprising that Losoul (Peter Kremer) took four years to follow up such a monumental work. Unfortunately, *Getting Even*, while mostly solid, doesn't match *Belong's* skewed brilliance. *Getting Even's* reliance on stern, simplistic 4/4 rhythms and faltering attempts at pop ("A Blood Sample" and "You Know") overshadow Losoul's inventive array of percussion eccentricities and warped keyboard tones. The disc ironically peaks on its most atypical cuts: "Soul Down" (a hypnotic downtempo tech-dub and "Warriors (Rock)"'s mesmerizing schaffel with Gang Of Four-ish guitar stabs. *Dave Segal*

STEPHAN MATHIEU ON TAPE Hapna/SWE/CD

Mathieu is a unique sound artist in that he's not easily pigeonholed into the requisite categories—lowercase, microtonal, pop ambient, strict gallery. For the listeners, this is indeed good, and here he moves to yet more interesting, organic territory. *On Tape*—a single 32-minute exploration—uses existing material, reworking and reprocessing it and adding his instrumentation, although you'd be hard pressed to find audio traces of this. It's a meditative piece that folds you in with a somewhat harsh initial tonal range and affectionate site recordings, only to

lead you on a gorgeous walk down warm, rich, gathered paths. *J. David Marston*

MCNEAL & NILES THRUST Chocolate Industries/US/CD

It seems like every old record that ever put punk and funk on the same page has been re-issued recently. McNeil & Niles' virtually unknown 1979 LP *Thrust* has a track called "Punk Funk" and was recorded partially at Devo's Man-Ray Studio, but any relation to the new wave ends there. *Thrust* sounds like Bob James or early Kool and the Gang in a garage, dropping unembellished, classic-sounding grooves left and right. Originally released in a limited pressing that barely made its way past Akron, Ohio, this priceless result of a fairly recent Midwestern crate digging expedition is well worth a 25-year wait. *Jesse Serwer*

MF DOOM MM..FOOD Rhymesayers/US/CD

After years of relative obscurity, Daniel Dumile is finally getting his due credit as one of hip-hop's greatest lyricists, thanks to his 2004 hook-up with producer Madlib, *Madvillainy*. But the fact is Madvillain is the least interesting of the various personas Dumile's morphed into since re-inventing himself as MF Doom, and his own beats are more interesting than those of the over-hyped Madlib. Beginning with a sample from *Wild Style*, *Mm..Food* plays like a 2004 re-envisioning of Doom's debut, *Operation: Doomsday*, with a food fetish. Divided into "appetizers" ("Hoe Cakes"), instrumental-only "special recipes" ("Poo-Putt Platter," "Fig Leaf Bi-Carbonate") and "entrees" ("Rapp Snitch Knishes"), the first nine tracks play like a warm-up for the last six. Fueled by meandering, surrealist lyricism, cut-and-paste beats, a hearty helping of dialogue samples and, apparently, food, *Mm..* is Doom at the top of his game. *Jesse Serwer*

MIGHTY IMPERIALS THUNDER CHICKEN Daptone/US/CD

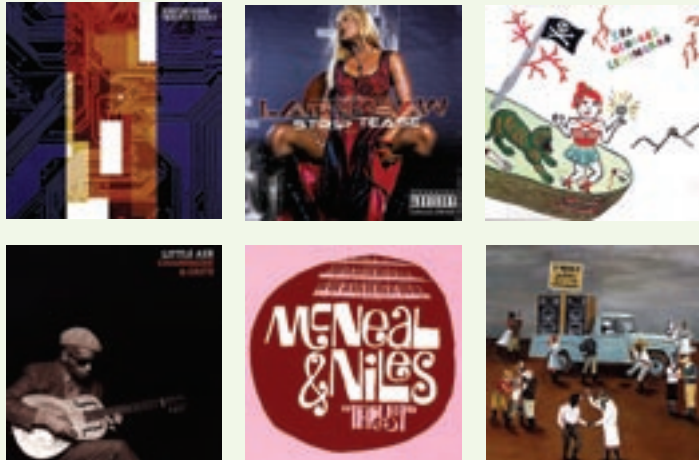
Two things hard to believe about The Mighty Imperials' *Thunder Chicken*: 1) It was recorded by four 16-year-old kids, and 2) It was recorded in 1999, not 1969. And I mean that in the best possible way. The Imperials Cissy strut with that classic minimalist Meters soul-breaks funk,



FERTILE GROUND

FERTILE GROUND BLACK IS... Counterpoint/UK/CD

Fertile Ground isn't a couple of guys playing with computers in their bedroom—they're a band and they sound like it. Drawing equally from the diaspora of black music, the seven member outfit from Baltimore, MD, creates a hearty, fulfilling stew of Afrobeat, blues and R&B. Vibrant-voiced Navasha Daya heads their cosmic journeys, dropping pithy lines like "woe to those tryin' to stop these killer African bees from making honey" as the enthusiastic (but never self-indulgent) instrumentalists work their tight magic. This is positive music that's positively captivating. *Peter Nicholoon*





LUSINE

LUSINE SERIAL HODGEPODGE
Ghostly/US/CD

Around for what seems like eons and adored by only the few, an exquisitely engineered full-lengther on Ghostly might just be what the underappreciated Jeff McIlwain needs. While previous comp appearances and EPs distinctively set out his crystalline IDM message of difference and individuality, his work reaches a marrow chilling apex here, with myriad deployments of varying percussive patterns layered beneath a synthesized world of unending imagined possibilities. Dubbed out blasts of errant machinery and cooling beds of synth bits combine to form a cohesive and brilliant fusion. *Brian Paul*

field treats keep on coming. From “Driffkicker” to “Flying Seed,” each track is a real eclectic gem. Check it, if you know what’s good for ya! *Gerald GIK Kelleher*

MONEY MARK DEMO? OR DEMOLITION?
Chocolate Industries/US/CD

Money Mark has been an interesting study in artistic evolution. Going from the Beastie Boys’ carpenter of choice to outshining all of their collective musicianship to releasing his instrumental indulgences on Mo’ Wax seems a pretty solid trajectory. As time has gone on, he’s had increasingly frequent flirtations with the mic; on his Chocolate Industries debut he goes into full-on songwriter mode. It’s a good look. The songs on Mark’s latest are by far his most developed and fall somewhere between *Sea Change*-era Beck’s torn love notes and the quirky, shadowy pop of Gorillaz. *Stephen Christian*

MUTINY YADA YADA
Underwater-Sunflower/UK/CD

Yada Yada, Mutiny’s second album, abounds with straight-line, four-on-the-floor house prosaisms—the dropped melody and pause followed by invading, volume-increasing drum fill, for instance—which would work well as touchstones and historical Easter eggs if the record wasn’t otherwise conservative. And yet, glimmers of energy and good ideas give it hot breath: Sweetie Irie’s infectious ragga vocals on the best track, “Dem Girls;” the inventive, spare rhythm quirks on “Shock;” the way the looped synth bubbles serenely atop Amrit Rahi’s longing, blue vocal hook on “I Need You.” But after 2003’s quirky *In the Now*, *Yada Yada* feels kinda “in the 1996.” *Julianne Shepherd*

MY ROBOT FRIEND HOT ACTION!
Proptronix/US/CD

You want to get into the nuts and bolts of robotics? How about chewing on these nuts? My Robot Friend is a metallic master baiter. He tosses out a tempting line and pulls you into his magic world. It’s a world where machines no longer need oil since they get slicked up on the sounds of the Pet Shop Boys. It’s a place where emotional boy bots got rusty streaks running down their cheeks from nights of crying over unrequited crushes. Click clack keyboards, Euro-flash synths, and bright light freak beats form the electrified program. Do your primitive human ears hear the cyber-croons? They’re moaning a message: My Robot Friend has calculated the future and it’s filled with hot droid disco love. *Frosty*

OCOTE SOUL SOUNDS AND ADRIAN QUESADA
EL NINO Y EL SOL
Aire Sol/US/CD

If you didn’t know better, you could easily mistake *El Nino y El Sol* for some obscure Latin chestnut from the early ’70s—from the Carlos Castaneda-esque album art to the mellow magic contained within, it’s got that ol-skool “Acapulco Gold” vibe written all over it. But don’t try pricing it up on eBay just yet. Crate-digiristas, take heed: El Niño is actually a side project from multitalented, multi-instrumentalist duo Martin Perna (Antibalas) and Adrian Quesada (Grupo Fantasma), which aims to do for Latin music what Poets of Rhythm did for jazz/funk fusion. Trade in your E for peyote and chill out to some of the nicest flute, vibes and MPC 2000 combinations in many a moon. *Eric K. Arnold*

OKTOBER PROJEKT:BUILDING
Freshchest/US/CD

A street-savvy lyricist from the Bronx, Oktober has been on the grind for the past four years, releasing several excellent 12-inches and a pair of small-run CDs. On his official debut full-length, he hits us with 16 solid tracks that showcase his verbal gifts over gritty, sample-fueled production. “NYC,” the lead single, is a dope hometown anthem, “Four Korners” channels *Nasty*-era Nas and J-Live pops up for the video game dedication “Reset The Game.” One of the year’s best albums; look for this cat to be large very soon. *Brolin Winning*

WALE OYEJIDE ONE DAY...EVERYTHING CHANGED
Shaman Work/US/CD

The distance between Atlanta and Lagos never seemed particularly close—until Nigerian-born, Dirty South-based artist Wale Oyejide arrived on the scene. Oyejide calls his innovative mix of Afrobeat, hip-hop and post-neo-soul “broken jazz,” yet if anything, his revolutionary Afro-futurist stance suggests it’s time to build, not destroy. “There’s a War Going On,” as Oyejide’s lava-hot duet with Jay Dee proclaims, and he wants you to “Riot & Revolt”—not party & bullshit. Elsewhere, the hip-hop ancestors are praised in a duet with MF Doom, and listeners are urged to “Keep Pushing” and stop “Wasting Time.” Not only is this one of the most engaging and creative hip-hop albums you’ll hear this year, it’s easily one of the best. *Eric K. Arnold*

PHONIQUE IDENTIFICATION
Dessous/GER/CD

German producer Phonique’s grinding electronic house EPs are targeted at the dancefloor, but on his debut album, *Identification*, they only account for part of his sound. Granted, there’s a succession of clubby tracks, most notably echoes of bleep techno and Detroit musicality on “Robotta Reprise” and “On A Hot Summer Day,” which out-drones the Get Physical back catalog. However, Phonique’s got his sights set on a parallel pop world, a place where Erlend Øye’s charmingly androgynous whine on the electro-pop “For The Time Being” and Paris The Black Fu’s breathy raps on the sexy R&B of “Thick N’ Rich” top the charts all year round. *Richard Brophy*

QUANTAZELLE COASTER
Subvariant/US/CD

The key to any hypnotic record is the beat. Quantazelle (a.k.a. Liz McLean Knight) uses the same deep bass and stuttering synth stubs to keep you on track while she takes her static samples skating across the cosmic plains. A hot trick that could get stale in someone else’s hands, but Quantazelle melds in delicate instrumentation and slowly builds the tracks into a high-paced frenzy, a playful kind of manic with toy piano tinkering out mischievous melodies. *Coaster’s* collection of spry songs is genuine experimental endearment. *Carla Costa*

RANDOLPH RANDOLPH SAYS, THIS IS...WHAT IT IS
Mahogani/US/CD

The jazzy, soulful debut album by Detroit’s Paul Randolph doesn’t exactly feel like a debut because of the longtime session player’s resume. He’s played with Carl Craig’s Innerzone Orchestra, Amp Fiddler, Parliament Funkadelic, Reclouse, Kevin Saunderson (Inner City, Reece Project), Mad Mike Banks (Underground Resistance) and a slew of other artists. Warm, welcoming jazzy house music is the common vibe throughout *Randolph Says’* six tracks (a relatively short foray), unsurprising considering it was released by Mahogani Music, Kenny Dixon Jr.’s (Moodymann) label imprint. If nothing else, *Randolph Says* gives listeners an enticing sampling of the potential talent of Paul Randolph, proving it’s time for him to step out on his own and proclaim his solo turf in the Motor City. *Tim Pratt*

SALMONELLA DUB ONE DROP EAST
Virgin/NZ/CD

With their fifth full-length, one of New Zealand’s greatest exports lets the sun shine in on dub’s typically murky, cavernous spaces. The five-piece brings jazzy horns, some drum & bass urgency and tides of drifting ambience into their easy, melodic mix. Album opener “Longtime” skanks with a rootsy vocal hook, acoustic guitars and rich harmonies move beneath “Slide;” “Dancehall Girl”—the album’s first single, which will kill in the progressive markets throughout New Zealand—continues with upbeat, aquamarine bliss. Even as the album gradually sets into dusky evening shades, buoyant arrangements and warm vocals keep even the more ominous, bass-heavy tunes (“Nu Steppa,” “Octopus”) from sinking into darkness. *Jonathan Zwicke*

LORI SCACCO CIRCLES
Eastern Developments/US/CD

On *Circles*, Lori Scacco integrates her diverse background—as an architectural student, classically trained pianist, member of the Savath & Savalas live band and Seely alum—into her take on environmental ambient jazz. A cursory listen may suggest these delicate compositions to be benign, even slight. But coursing through *Circles’* open spaces lies a strong, uplifting emotional tug. If *Circles* lapses into Chicago post-rock autopilot in its weaker moments, it also reveals a voice on the verge of realizing itself. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

SHAPESHIFTERS
THE SHAPESHIFTERS WAS HERE
Cornerstone Recording Art Society/US/CD

Just when you thought you’d heard the nerdiest, most pocket-protecting variation on hip-hop ever (cLOUDDDEAD, anyone?), another crew from California comes along to take the cake. LAs The Shapeshifters are some freakin’ dorks. Kicking around since the early ’90s, the AWOL One-led crew ain’t all bad, though. Unlike the majority of the work coming from their NoCal Anticon brethren, *The Shapeshifters Was Here* lacks pretension, and features a few inspired, pure hip-hop tracks like “Run The Crowd.” Even their semi-embarrassing take on the Transformers theme “More Than Meets The Eye” contains a few lyrical gems, and mostly adept lyrical flow. *Jesse Serwer*

SHY CHILD ONE WITH THE SUN
Say Hey/US/CD

Way to drum, spaztastics. These kids aren’t shy about banging the hell out of their kit, that’s for sure, and we’re all better off for it. *One With The Sun’s* barely got melody, underpinning most of the songs with repeating series of half and whole steps that stay within a four note range. The dancey punky musicality comes instead from the minimal, boyish sing-song funk and the inventive, jerk perfect drumming. “Technicrats” is just handclaps and sass, and the title track is all claws and hypnotic propulsion, getting surprising mileage from the bare bones engine. *Selena Hou*

RONI SIZE RETURN TO V
Thrive/US/CD

Brace yourself drum & bass hounds (what’s left of you), because Roni Size is back with a new full-length. *Return to V* re-sows the dark ‘n’ deadly seeds he planted in ‘93 when he got started droppin’ bombs on Bryan Gee and Jumping Jack Frost’s V Recordings. Each of the 18 breakneck club-stormers—ranging from tech-step mayhem to ragga bedlam to soulful jump-up—could easily become a classic anthem. *Return to V* is a 100% vocal album where Size integrates singers like reggae luminary Sweetie Irie, soul-grabbing diva Jocelyn Brown, human beatboxer Rahzel, Sweetpea, Wilks, Stamina, Vikter Duplaix and plenty others. *Sean O’Neal*

SMOKE EVERYTHING
Q Tape/FRA/CD

From the atmospheric smooth lounge jazz that informed downtempo to Bitches Brew-esque freak outs to off-kilter 5/4 funk jams, Smoke’s *Everything* is perhaps one of the most appropriately named records. Reminiscent of a Teo Macero or Can project (where larger studio improvisations are edited down to form songs), Smoke quickly jumps from one style and tempo to a seemingly unrelated other. Originally released in 1973 on MPS, this Californian psychedelic jazz outfit creates a far out sound with their driving yet fluent pulse and motif-based melodic improvisations. *Nick Follett*

THE SOFT PINK TRUTH
DO YOU WANT NEW WAVE OR DO YOU WANT THE SOFT PINK TRUTH?
Tigerbeat6/US/CD

On 2002’s *Do You Party?*, Matmos’ Drew Daniel glitched up and deconstructed house. Here, he cheekily recontextualizes American hardcore and English punk and new-wave songs. Even if you don’t know the originals, *Do You Want New Wave...?* succeeds as minimalist, idiosyncratic electro-funk. You can tell Daniel loves these tracks, but he also wants to have fun twisting them into unrecognizable shapes. Of the many triumphs here, the chaotic rendition of Crass’ “Do They Owe Us A Living?” with Vickie Bennett’s hilarious dead-



pushing organ, guitar, bass and neck-snappable drums so close together they probably need a crowbar to finish the session. Mostly instrumental, these dusty grooves reek with reverence for the old school. Vocalist Joseph Henry shows up to take it to the bridge Godfather style, and occasional horns polish up the delicious grit, but only a little. *Jonathan Zwicke*

PETE MISER
CAMOUFLAGE IS RELATIVE
Coup de Grace/US/CD

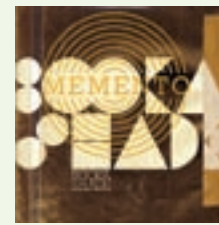
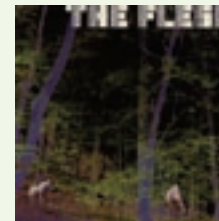
Mr. Miser follows up the acclaimed sleeper *Radio Free Brooklyn* with another dose of blunted b-boy philosophy, astute personal observations and real-life urban storytelling (i.e. getting mean-mugged by prissy-ass suburban chicks in SUVs while skating with his homies). A true self-made man, Miser’s original production keeps the funk factor high, and his ill artwork can be peeped inside the CD booklet. Special guests include ex-Gil Scott-Heron collaborator Brian Jackson and angelic-voiced BK hottie Maya Azucena, but it’s Miser’s show all the way: he’s nicer on the mic than all three Beastie Boys put together—flowing effortlessly between self-deprecating humor and cocky bragadoccio, but never coming off like a cheesy cornball. *Eric K. Arnold*

MIX MASTER MIKE BANGZILLA
Immortal/US/CD

On *Bangzilla*, Invisibl Skratch Pickl and Beastie Boys DJ Mix Master Mike forgoes any middlemen with mics to deliver another album geared strictly for scratch aficionados. Without a rhyme in sight, those ignorant to the turntablism lexicon will have trouble deciphering the frenetic beats encrypted amidst chops, flares and stabs. All sounds are fair game; whether it’s nursery rhymes (“Tranzmission”), string arrangements (“Bangzilla”) or spacey effect (“Skanner 13”), they all get manhandled over an endless stream of sturdy drum breaks. At times the cacophony of sound can get monotonous, but MMM is a vinyl-chewing beast that must be heard to be believed. *Aqua Boogie*

MOMMA GRAVY ADIOS
Different Drummer/UK/CD

Like the cutesy subversiveness of comic artist Jim Woodring, the artwork here shamelessly disguises the true intentions within. “Sizzling Finch” invites the listener before the dirty sub-basslines kick in and the shadow of a hulking beat emerges, tellin’ you, “You’re not going anywhere mate!” Once you accept this, things mellow and the left-



ED O.G.

ED O.G. FEATURING PETE ROCK
MY OWN WORST ENEMY
Fatbeats/US/CD

Famed hip-hop trench worker Ed O.G. has always been hip-hop’s fringe threat, a solid, creative rapper who depended more on skill and style than braggartly claims. But with his greatest successes behind him, it seemed that the old man of Roxbury was shit out of rhymes. His latest looks to reclaim his place in the world, and his confidence shows. Production by Pete Rock is not as impressive as Ed himself, whose rhythmic vocal stabs and popping grooves make for irresistible tracks. Guests include Diamond D, Masta Ace and Krumb Snatcha, but this is truly Ed’s show. *Ken Micallef*

pan vocals and the blasphemous microdisco version of Nervous Gender's "Confession," with its malignant swarm of old-school synths and acidic fibrillations, resonate strongest. *Dave Segal*

STYROFOAM NOTHING'S LOST
Morr Music/GER/CD

With 2003's *I'm What's There to Show That Something's Missing*, Brussels-based producer Arne Van Petegem swapped DSP contortions for more micro-edited melody. Now Petegem has reconciled his range within plaintive pop. Crispy, sputtering click-tracks dashed with minor key accoutrements are sculpted with the stellar assists of Anticon's Alias, the Notwist's Markus Archer, the Postal Service/Death Cab for Cutie's Ben Gibbard and American Analog Set's Andrew Kenny. Piano shimmers and guitar twang make vapor trails through knotted tendrils of prickly skitter eddies. Petegem's own vocals—along with those of Gibbard, Kenny, Lali Puna's Valerie Trebeljahr and Das Pop's Bent Van Looy—harmonize buoyantly atop the sprawling undercurrents; and regardless of who's singing, Petegem's voice has never been clearer. *Tony Ware*

BETTIE SWANN
Astralwerks/US/CD

In the late '60s and early '70s, Bettie Swann reinterpreted country and pop hits in her Louisiana croon, turning such songs as "Stand By Your Man," "Angel of the Morning" and "Don't You Ever Get Tired of Hurting Me" into bona fide Southern soul laments. Beyond connecting R&B with country, she drew the connection between the women of country and soul—before the leverage of feminism, both were plagued by the sorrow of bad men and soured love. This compilation is the most complete reissue, and includes the soul side "Today I Started Loving You Again," a bright, brassy Merle Haggard cover drooled after by your local soul DJ. *Julianne Shepherd*

SWOD GEHEN
City Centre Offices/GER/CD

Crying into a frosty pint of beer never had a more appropriate soundtrack. Cinematic in scope yet intensely personal, Swod's *Geheh*—the product of Oliver Doerell (aka Dictaphone) and Stephan Wöhrmann's collaboration translates melancholy settings into delicate melodies and plaintive instrumental flourishes. Swod accents rolling piano lines with clicks, whirs and pops before swathing everything in a feather-light electronic fuzz; the end result sounds a bit like a heavily depressed Four Tet. Though not the most subtle work, *Geheh* is undeniably beautiful, arresting and, at the very least, an utterly pleasurable (if not a touch self-indulgent) musical atmosphere to wallow in. *Christine Hoizh*

TOTAL SCIENCE GOOD GAME
CIA/UK/CD

When Oxford duo Total Science burst on the drum & bass scene, they served up a driving, bouncy sound that was accessible without resorting to obvious gimmicks and sheer absurdity; simultaneously, their tunes trumped the popular dark, heavy metal-inspired sound for playability and chart placement. With *Good Game*, the pair proves that jungle still needs them, with nine tracks designed to stoke dancefloor fires again and again. Full of crisp snares, spiraling low-end and clever influences cribbed from techno, house, dancehall and old-school hardcore, *Good Game* is pure fun. Play on, boys. *Star Eyes*

THE VANISHING STILL LIVES ARE FAILING
GSL/US/CD

Enter the echo chamber of Vanishing's *Still Lives Are Failing* and submit to the shrieking, seductive dancepunk within. *Still Lives* launches right into the seduction with "Lovesick," which struts around with a sizzling saxophone line wrapped around its bare shoulders like a hussy's bright feather boa. The Karen-O-esque vocals whip around, rising from insistent moan to all out wailing. Vanishing toys with the bal-

ance between unbearably tense and simply explosive, as "8,18" thrums like an anxious, amplified heartbeat, dancing purely on nerve endings. *Selena Hou*

GLEN WASHINGTON WANNA BE LOVED
VP/US/CD

Wanna Be Loved is an apt title for Washington's latest effort. The lovers rock crooner (and former Stevie Wonder drummer) has one of the genre's most distinctive voices, but has toiled in relative obscurity for the last quarter century. For the most part, he sticks to the lovers material here, but adds touches of consciousness on "Mighty God" and "This Life" (over the "Waiting In Vain" version). His plaintive voice is impossibly sincere; at times, it sounds as if he's just finished crying (and may start again). But on "Roller Coaster Ride," he seems to be truly enjoying his career—ups and downs included. *Ross Haug*

WU-TANG CLAN
DISCIPLES OF THE 36 CHAMBERS CHAPTER 1
Sanctuary/US/CD

It's a raucous romp with the entire cast of Wu-Tang, nine MCs deep at a San Bernardino, CA, concert. As hip-hop comes of age, it's time to reminisce at a live revival with Ghostface, GZA, Inspectah Deck, Masta Killa, Method Man, ODB, Raekwon, RZA and U-God, Staten Island style. Gritty nostalgia looms on classics "Criminology," "Ice Cream" and "Method Man," proof that as a unit Wu-Tang can still wild out with the best of 'em, expletives and all. *Tamara Warren*

YELLOWTONE TAR FILE JUNCTION
Ai/UK/CD

Continuing to establish itself as the UK's premier home for new electronic talent, Ai unleashes this monster of an album. Harnessing the electro leanings of an illustrious Op-Art/B12/Black Dog past and updating this lineage through modern technological know-how and Simon Harding's use of "real" instruments, most noticeably guitar, *Tar File Junction* feels like an intimate introduction to one man's distinct conception of the realm of instrumental music. Free from simple repetitive loops and embracing the possibilities of sound, Mr. Harding's ambitious debut is a stellar addition to a crowded field of IDM noodling. *Brian Paul*

YOHIMBE BROTHERS THE TAO OF YO
Thirsty Ear/US/CD

Fortify one supremely musical, polymorphous turntablist with the world's heaviest funk rock guitarist and you end up with a wickedly potent stimulant. On their second album, the Yohimbe Brothers—axe-grinder Vernon Reid of Living Colour and the ever-versatile DJ Logic—hone the sexed-up bounce of their debut into a jagged, penetrating edge slicing through crunchy breaks, new jazz atmospherics, Latin grooves, and hardened political hip-hop. Reid's MACH 3 guitar blasts through Logic's ghostly samples and hypnotic scratches, while guests like drums wiz Deantoni Parks, vocalist Latasha Nevada Diggs, and MCs Traz and Bos Omega add aggro percussion and pointed lyrics. *Jonathan Zwickel*

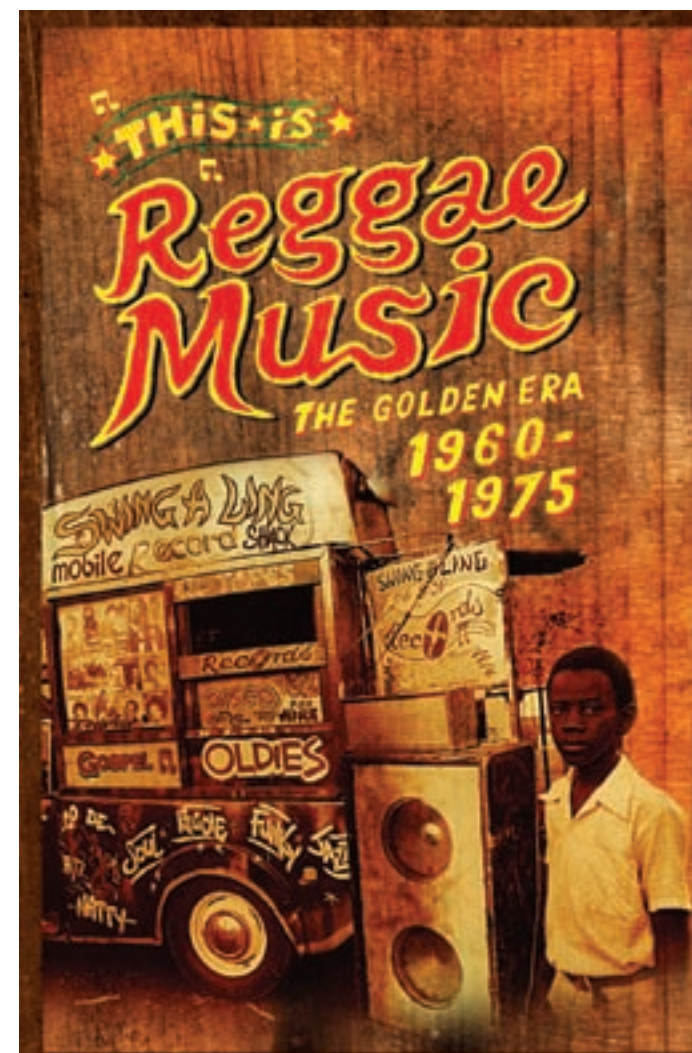
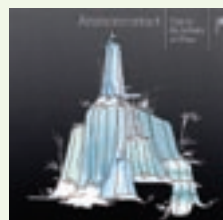
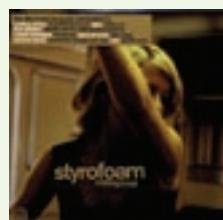
ZAP MAMA ANCESTRY IN PROGRESS
Luaka Bop/US/CD

Zap Mama is one sexy motherfucker, and a talented one at that. Her vocal arrangements have defined the cutting edge of urban-tinged world music for a while, and on her latest release, she globally outsources hip-hop, which actually comes out sounding like some post-Afrofuturist shit; call it neo-neo-soul with a Diasporan twist. Special guests Common, Talib Kweli, Erkyah Badu, Scratch and the ubiquitous ?uestlove don't distract from the proceedings; Marie Dauline (Zap Mama's main mama) has enough star power—not to mention serious chops and pipes—not to be outshined or out-freaked by anyone. Instead, she coaxes stellar creative collaborations out of each of her guests, resulting in an album that references the past just often enough to map out the future, while sounding very much in the present moment. *Eric K. Arnold*



HEXSTATIC
HEXSTATIC MASTER VIEW
Ninja Tune/UK/CD-DVD

Drawing on inspirations from mid-20th century futurism and '80s home computing to hip-hop and electro, Hexstatic returns to mash up sound and vision with *Master View*. Sample-dense tracks like "Extra Life," whose theme is vintage videogames, and "Telemetron" ('50s educational films) keep heads nodding while being complex enough to endure repeat listening, though the real surprise here is a bonus DVD featuring videos of the album's tracks. The clip for "Distorted Minds" features visual representations of MC Juice Aleem's lyrics flying out of his mouth as fast as he can say them, and the hypnotic visuals in "Salvador" display concentric circles of capoeira dancers. Taking the kitsch technology shtick a bit further, 3-D versions of some videos are included, accompanied by a pair of red and blue glasses to get the effect. A game of Pong, anyone? *Mike Battaglia*



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Top 5 Progressive chart for November 2004

1	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
2	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
3	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
4	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
5	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists

Top 5 Drum 'n' Bass chart for November 2004

1	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
2	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
3	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
4	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
5	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists

Top 5 Trance chart for November 2004

1	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
2	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
3	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
4	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
5	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists

Top 5 HTFR Rare 12" Vinyl for November 2004

1	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
2	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
3	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
4	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists
5	Various Artists	Various Artists	Various Artists



▲ Basement Boys

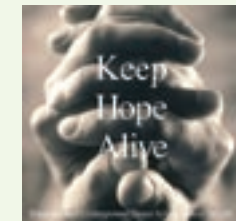
The big empty '80s prompted a trio of DJs to hole up under Baltimore's Jasper Street and look within for something substantive. Guided by their faith, the Basement Boys broke out the trusty 4-track to create majestic "gospel garage," begetting many an influence and accomplishment. An abundance of soulful, standard-defining house singles followed into the '90s, exuding affirmations through edifying lyrics and warming basslines that seemed driven by a higher power. While not always courtesy of the God squad, tracks were indefatigably positive, exemplified on *15th Anniversary* by Crystal Waters' celebrated (and catchy) ode to homeless dignity, "Gypsy Woman."

About the same time, Paradise Garage vets Kevin Hedge (The Shelter resident) and Josh Milan (vocals, keyboards) felt the force and became über-production team Blaze, kicking out PG classics and reworking folks like UK synth-pop tarts ABC on Motown. A few years ago, a grim *National Geographic* article inspired Blaze to contribute with audio and alms to LIFEbeat (The Music Industry Fights AIDS). The resultant *Blaze Presents Underground Dance Artists United For Life: Keep Hope Alive* reacquaints us with Barbara "I Get Lifted" Tucker's "Most Precious Love," "A Wonderful Place" by Ultra "Free" Naté (who got her big lift from the Basement Boys), and New Jersey pastor and falsetto master Kenny Bobien, who preaches over the lilting "Hiya Luv." Additional UDAUFL members Joi Cardwell, Arnold Jarvis and Ten City lead singer/Trax Records prize Byron Stingily join in on the "We Are The World" vibe and donate everything (that means songwriting royalties, too). On that note, Blaze adds its own touch with the ebullient "We Are One."

Traveling further afield, the British gathering known as the Southport Weekender has been doing its part to spread the groove gospel amid the dour populace for the last 17 years, and its compilations

COMP REVIEWS 12.04

BASEMENT BOYS: 15TH ANNIVERSARY COMPILATION
Basement Boys/US/2xCD
KEEP HOPE ALIVE
King Street/US/CD
SOUTHPORT WEEKENDER 2: BLAZE MIX, JOE CLAUSSELL MIX
suSU/UK/2xCD



showcase the festival's prime guests to the rest of us. The Blaze mix on *Southport Weekender 2* brings Manhattanites Hedge and Milan back to redouble their efforts with tasty, "corking" selections from Funky Soul Players feat. Stephanie Cooke (Bobien's wife), Kim English, Soul Switch feat. Melissa Morgan, and Pastor Bobien reprising his signature song. Part two of the two-disc set, the Joe Claussell mix, has the Brooklyn-born Spiritual Life label maven doing back-atcha turns on Blaze, Ustad Sultan Khan, Louie Vega, Instant House, and Jaffa. Deep, delicious, divine.

As for the groundbreaking Basement Boys, finally an all-embracing *15th Anniversary Compilation* has arisen. DJs Teddy Douglas (disc one) and Spen (disc two) spin the Charm City darlings' faves, including incarnations as 33 1/3 Queen and Those Guys, plus solo work. Former Two Tons of Fun founder and Weather Girl Martha Wash beautifully belts "Leave a Light On," continually shaming wanna-be-divas worldwide. Mass Order extols "Lift Every Voice" and Waters revives her sophomore hit, "100% Pure Love." The BB's no-doubt-about-it gospel imprint God's House Records should prove a worthy resource for the 30th Anniversary Compilation...as long as we continue to believe. *Stacy Mzyn*

A TASTE OF FINGERLICKIN' THANG 3
Finger Lickin' UK/CD
BEATZ & BOBZ VOL. 3
Functional Breaks/UK/CD

When the UK breakbeat revival hit in the '90s, it was thanks in part to the efforts of the party-ready, up-for-it Finger Lickin' team. These folks still have their breaks sorted, and this third taste shows off the might of roster stars Soul of Man, Plump DJs, Lee Coombs & Meat Katie and Drummatic Twins. On the darker, heavier tip, Tayo's pickings for the Functional Breaks label center around dubbed-out, rolling breaks, with the likes of Smith & Mighty, Freq Nasty and Aquasky proving that they are as much a part of the revolution of breakbeat as a testament to its longevity. *Christine Heieh*

DE-PROGRAMMING SEQUENCE
Liberation Systems/US/CD

Liberation Systems wants to evoke the illbient movement of the early '90s with their *De-programming Sequence*. And you know what? Drifting through the soot-covered streets with a mind full of Deleuze and Sun Ra can still be titillating. This NYC-centric comp wisely avoids the awkward pacing and digital detritus that often cursed illbient, instead focusing on its liquid mixology and 20-watt lit jazz. Highlights: Shakeyface's hypnotic tabla-hop and tear-jerked electro-funk, Guillermo E. Brown's drum machine touring the projects. Lowlight: DJ

Spooky's bush league future-jazz. Black light: Kentyah Meets Jordan's sample of two ladies discussing Carl Jung's vision of nuclear holocaust. *Cameron Macdonald*

DJ-KICKS: DADDY G
IK7/US/CD

Daddy G. crystallized Massive Attack's departure into unexplored beat technology. The longtime DJ's smoothed-out sound is a primer for Massive Attack fans' rare collection essentials. It's a gritty journey, launching with Willie William's classic reggae joint "Armageddon Time," and then moving into Melaaz's eerie French croons on "Non Non Non." Tricky's unreleased "Aftermath" and Massive Attack's "Karma Koma" are sexy surprises. Massive Attack and Mos Def pop delicious on "I Against I," easing into Danny Krivit's remix of Aretha Franklin's "Rock Steady." Packed with fundkafied Massive Attack remixes, abstract beatseekers will be appeased by Daddy G's dreamlike sequencing. *Tamara Warren*

ELLEN ALLIEN: MY PARADE
Bpitch Control/GER/CD

Ellen Allien's notoriously long DJ sets are as sublime as her music; even whilst blending styles from trance to techno, she favors expressive melodies and subtle beat-architecture. Here, the minimal techno/label goddess mixes current European house and techno

(Step Time Orchestra, CJ Bolland) with Bpitch heavyweights, threaded by artfulness more than style. The mesmerizing, violin-sampled crackles of Modeselektor's "Rave Anthem" segue into Apparat's glassy, vocoded "Numb," with dropped bass and synth burrs, just before one of her own best tracks, the deep-low, chilly "Dresden." Quirk and nuance are her specialties, which is why Berlin's crawling with Ellen groupies and imitators. *Julianne Shepherd*

EM:T 0004
Em:t/UK/CD

What's this? Ambient synth excursions that lack DSP fingerprints and give listeners actual breathing space? How refreshing...well, almost. This compilation could soundtrack planetarium shows, dream-journal writing, crystal therapy sessions or colonics for that matter. Most of the artists try to pay the bills with New Age schmaltz, but there are exceptions. Red Leb's "Freezebee" deftly makes the long drones of so many '80s slasher flicks bearable with floating, new wave beats. Beatsystem's epic "Sud" is ended by a brilliant coda of crowd chatter at a French park blended with ocean waves. Just don't play this CD when you go to sleep; comas aren't pleasant. *Cameron Macdonald*

FORK ENDS
Audio Dregs/US/CD

A sequel to last year's wonderful *For Friends* compilation (get the play on words?), *Fork Ends* offers a perfect entry point for those new to Audio Dregs and an excellent new collection for the seasoned fan. Greg Davis goes space pop on the wonderfully titled "Regional Potato Chips." "Your Castle's Vaporware" proves Nudge is certainly one of the most overlooked exponents of shoegazer atomospherics. And Kazumasa Hashimoto's looped bucolia is simply sublime. The most perfect statement of intent the label has produced to date. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

KASABLANCA
SPANISH FLY
Greensleeves/UK/CD

Kasablanca's sparse drums and stick-and-move keyboard stabs make this riddim very challenging for DJs and singers, but leave it up to the veteran Bounty Killer to nail it. When he refers to Vybz Kartel as his "son" in his song, it has the unintended effect of reminding the listener that, despite his popularity, the student has not overtaken the teacher. Capleton and Sizzla also score big, but many tracks miss the mark altogether. With reggaeton heating things up all over, the Latin-flavored *Spanish Fly* is sure to be well received. The pulsing guitar-and-horn-driven riddim is slightly friendlier to singers than DJs, but Vybz, Ce'cile, Bounty and Elephant Man all bust big. *Ross Hoag*

KING JAMMY IN ROOTS
Auralux/UK/CD

"Dub plate inna session!," Johnny Osborne proclaims on the opening track, riding the ubiquitous Armagideon Time riddim into irie-ites territory. From there, Jammy's roots only get deeper, as Hugh Mundell, Michael Rose, Junior Reid, Barry Brown, Noel Phillips, Lacksley Castell and the Fantalls all step up to the echo chamber and deliver some sweet singer's styles—roots with quality, seen? Of course, several dub versions are included, along with extended showcase tracks, which confirm what you should already know: Jammy's the heartical dubmaster, second only to his spar King Tubby in the Jamaican studio engineer pantheon. Crucial! *Eric K. Arnold*

MIX FRANCE BRASIL—EXPRESSIONS URBANAS
ST2/BRA/CD

The United States only *thinks* it has the monopoly on hip-hop—witness the 16 head-nodding tracks from Brazilian and French artists here. The disc leans toward the musical and mellow, like the piano underlying Kid Royal S's "F** Capitaine A," and Instituto and Kamau's "Poesia de Concreto," which asks "voce vive ou so sobrevive?" (Do you live or just survive?) Brazilian Xis contributes the more beat-intensive "Girias do Norte." One drawback: With the exception of Congolese MC Pyroman, who guests on "En El Frente" with Veiga and Salazar, the disc mainly alternates tracks from French and Brazilian artists, instead of letting them collaborate. *Luciana Lopez*

ON THE SEVENTH—PARK HYATT CHICAGO
PRESENTED BY KING BRITT
Milan/US/CD

Yes, the idea of releasing a CD meant to capture the feel of a hotel floor, no matter how chic, is corporate branding at its most loathsome. Unfortunately, the disc is good, with a smooth, sexy downtempo feel that (I hate to say this) makes you forget the

hotel chain's hand. Spacek's previously unreleased "Peep Live Show" is spare and lovely, barely more than beats and soulful vocals. Previous Britt collaborator Josh Wink kicks in "I'm on Fire," another track full of an understated sophistication. Scuba's "Angel" showcases Michelle Shaprow's warm vocals beautifully. What's next? Starbucks CDs? Oh, wait.... *Luciana Lopez*

ONE STEP AHEAD 3
Straight Ahead/SWI/CD

Starting with the stately strings of Magic Number's "It's a Sad Sad World" and ending with the burbling electronics of Clyde feat. Capitol A's "Serve It Up!" this mix by Alex Dallas and Domenico Ferrari covers quite a bit of future soul territory. But, man is the journey smooth, featuring excellent programming and skillful mixes. Dallas & Ferrari pick more relaxed, R&B-flavored versions of songs that have been big on broken beat dancefloors (Focus' "Havin' Fun" and "Thinkin' About" by Bakura) alongside quirkier numbers like KV5's accordion and sub-bass stormer "You Know This," keeping this mix warm and laid-back, but full of funky surprises. *Peter Nicholson*

SHOCKOUT, VOL. 1
Shockout/US/CD

Bob Marley's "Buffalo Soldier" almost sounds like a feel-good song that the U.S. Army could use to recruit the Trustafarian demographic. It's a far cry from this comp's toasters, who bark like guerrilla commanders ordering a palace siege. In the past year, Kid606's raggacore/fuckstep/mutant dancehall label released several 12-inchers now collected here. His noisenik compatriots like Com.A, DJ Rupture and The Bug are paired with several toasters, but mostly the mighty Wayne Lonesome. Their DSP intensifies the spats and brawling rhythms. Elsewhere, Soundmurderer & SK-1 drain the cliché from the Amen break. Even though this bludgeoning can induce numbness in one sitting, *Shockout* is still a solid primer. *Cameron Macdonald*

TEMPO TECHNIK TEAMWORK
Staubgold/GER/CD

Staubgold's techno aesthetic has never been flashy, preferring the elegant, spare glint of restraint over overbearing bling. In *Tempo Technik Teamwork*, the tracks stand like individual pearls, smooth with a brittle elegance. "Help Yourself" radiates a slowly plinking serenity, while Ras Donovan's voice floats over Mapstation's lilting dub, touching down to the beat ever so briefly before rising up again, like a grave balloon dance. Faust and Dälek's noir hip-hop is blown through with a surprising lightness that leads nicely into Ekkehard Ehlers and John Frusciant's eerie spaghetti-western chamber shoegaze. And Kammerflimmer Kollektief, featured on both discs, melts its static snowflakes on your tongue. *Selena Hou*

TRANSCENDANCES: NEW SOUND PATTERNS
Groovement/PORT/CD

From Portugal comes this broken beat/future jazz compilation, combining older jams with a host of new and exclusive bits from card-carrying heads the likes of Domu and Moonstarr. The latter bursts forth with "Don't Sweat It," a West London-meets-Detroit roller that syncopates in all the right places, while the former, here in his Zoltar guise, works a wonky, nu-funk killer that stands out despite solid broken debuts from Portuguese artists Kasper vs JackZen and The Fisherman. Though it kicks off with a few too-limp tunes to make an impact, once it gets going *Transcendances* comes out a winner. *Mike Battaqlia*

VERSATILE MIXTAPE
Versatile/FRA/CD

This mix is really fucking weird—and I love it! *Versatile Mixtape* gets rolling with the gorgeous electro disco by Elektroids, Joakim and Château Flight for which this French label is probably best known. But 20 minutes into the mix there's a hijacking: dreamy pianos and strings from Sebastien Teller, truly bizarre cabaret

from White Noise and an ambient offering from Kirk Degiorgio to his new son Luca are now at the controls. Then the kick drum bursts back into the cabin, courtesy of Maurice Fulton's rubberhose rerub of I: Cube's "Vacuum Jackers" and glistening deepness from Future Beat Alliance. Don't miss this mix—a work of crazy genius like no other. *Peter Nicholson*

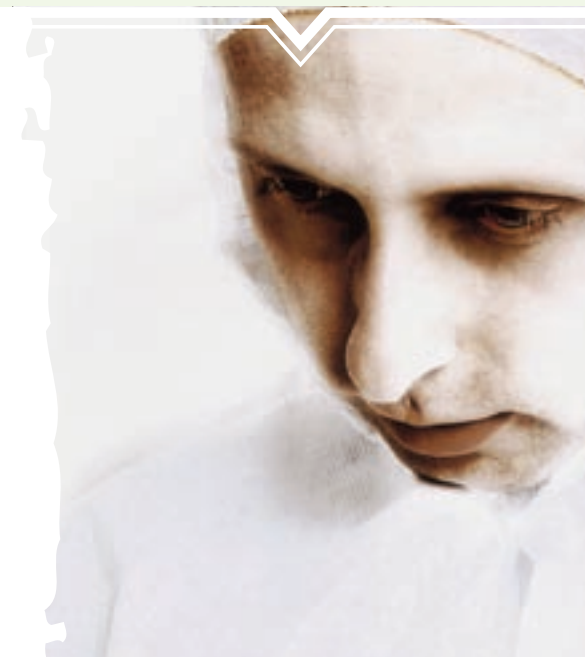
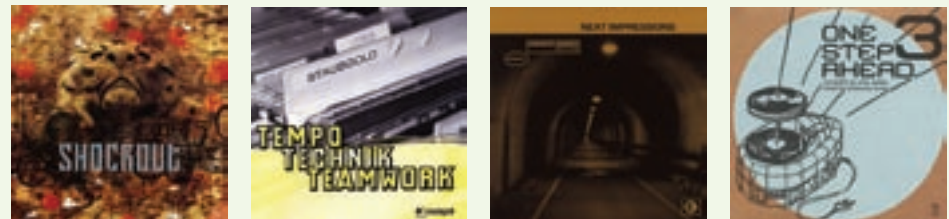
WATCH AND REPEAT PLAY
Warp/UK/CD

This megamix by Buddy Peace and ZILLA testifies to Warp Records' continued vitality in IDM/hip-hop/post-rock realms. The CD, which accompanies the excellent *WarpVision: The Videos 1989-2004* DVD, telescopes a huge chunk of Warp's catalog into 54 minutes. In the tradition of the *Bleach* mix, *Watch And Repeat Play* is part savvy promo device for ADD sufferers and part exhibition of deft mixing skills, cleverly threading teasing snippets of the label's greatest hits. When your roster's this deep and talented (Aphex Twin, Autechre, Squarepusher, Boards Of Canada,

Prefuse 73, Beans, REO, Broadcast, etc.), you could issue these sorts of comps 'til doomsday. *Dave Segal*

WHEELLE'S GROOVE
Light In The Attic/US/CD

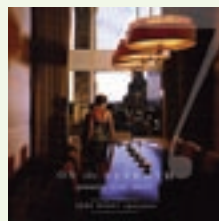
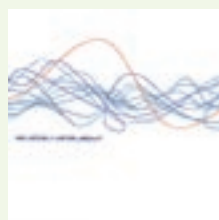
From the city that begat Quincy Jones, Jimi Hendrix and Ray Charles comes a collection of funk and soul sure to put Oyster Shoals on the map. The ghost of Brother Ray can be felt in the themes of "Brighter Tomorrow," as can the crafted funk of Kool and the Gang in Broham's "Nothing In Common" and the dirty soul of Stax with Cookin' Bag's "This Is Me." The intensity of the performances, with ultra-heavy drumming and often percussive piano, compliments the subtlety and strength of the songwriting and lyrics of hope and optimism. The choice of covers is not surprising ("Hey Jude," "Cissy Strut"), but the versions are anything but ordinary. Funkier than Johnny Damon's swing. *Nick Follert*



SCANNER

UNDERSCAN
Underscan/GER/CD

During the '90s, Underscan founders Mark Wagner and Ralf Pytlík (together known as Menu:Exit) were heavily influenced by artists like Aphex Twin, Autechre, Boards of Canada and Goem. In the spring of 2000, they joined forces to further intellectualize the sound-like taking simple geometry and transforming it into charmingly gentle chaos while remaining intricately precise. The fusion of IDM with minimalism may evoke labels like Warp, Skam, Dot and Mille Plateaux. The Berlin label follows in similar footsteps—but with a more defined sound and sharper distinction—for our present-day experimental music geeks. Underscan compiles selected tracks from the first eight ultra-limited 12" and 10" releases with a roster—including videogame-maker Dalezy, Gram, Scanner, Somshit, Frank Bretschneider and Onethema—that Wagner and Pytlík largely met online. The resulting self-titled compilation feeds your head with spliced 'n' diced breakbeats, crunchy distortion, gut-wrenching melodies and laidback laptop frolic. *Sean O'Neal*



PRESTO

NEXT IMPRESSIONS
Concrete Grooves/US/CD

I never imagined that the "boom bap" sound of hip-hop circa 1992-95 (A Tribe Called Quest, Gang Starr, Brand Nubian, Pete Rock, et al) would become a cottage industry. But revivalists like Jurassic 5, Ugly Duckling, Sound Providers and, em, Seattle's Boom-Bap Project, plus a legion of others, have kept hip-hop's MPC-drum driven, golden era-sound alive, and, in most cases, progressing. The same goes for LA's four-year-old DIY label Concrete Grooves and the persistent efforts of its director DJ Presto. Both as a producer and A&R man, Presto has found the Easy Mo Bees and Stimulated Dummies of this generation, and collected their works on *Next Impressions*, which primarily draws its talent from the fertile desert that is the LA hip-hop underground. Omid, Fat Jack & Mr. French (as Kingsbread), DJ Haul & Jed (a.k.a. Afrodisiac Soundsystem), Lowd and Mum's The Word infiltrate 17 tracks replete with meditative Rhodes samples and whip-crack drum breaks. Presto's work is finding the roses blooming through concrete grooves; *Next Impressions* is an impressive bouquet. *Tomas Palermo*

**HOUSE GUEST
REVIEWS:
PHONIQUE**

It's hard to pin down Berlin's Phonique (born Michael Vater) to one style or sound. His tracks trot around the genre map as much as they do the globe, appearing on labels including LA's deep house outpost Seasons, London's electro-flavored Crosstown Rebels and Paris' sultry Brique Rouge. His debut album, *Identification* (Dessous), is similarly unclassifiable as it moves between the reaches of 4/4, spanning tech house, disco and downbeat and including off-the-cuff collabs with Paris the Black Fu, Dixon and Erlend Øye. We pulled Vater away from a heated table tennis match with Pokerflat's Steve Bug to tell us what eclectic selections he drops at Berlin clubs like Tresor and Pfefferbank. *Mark Mizwerdes*

www.dessous-recordings.com

JOHN TEJADA SWEAT (ON THE WALLS) Pokerflat/GER/12

US boy John Tejada gives his 12" debut on Pokerflat after mixing the *Five Years of Pokerflat* compilation this summer. The A-side track, "Sweat (On The Walls)," is a very strong offering, with female vocals talking about club life while pushing hi-hats and quirky acid lines make everyone freak out! *Phonique*

DAN BERKSON CONCEPT Moodmusic/GER/12

Dan Berkson is originally from Chicago and used to work as a keyboard player. Eventually, he moved to London and started to produce deep and tech house for labels like Sondos and Exun. "Concept" sounds like what I call the new UK/German house sound—a touch of Chicken Lips meets DJ.T. with a strong bassline and warm chords. *Phonique*

DAVID DURIEZ WEREWOLF Duriez/FRA/CDR

Mr. Brique Rouge is back with a new sound. Extremely groovy basslines, underground beats and a simple (slightly Arab) melody make "Werewolf" into a hypnotic dancefloor beast. The second track on this EP, "On My Elbows," even comes with a remix by German acid legends Hardfloor. Big tune! *Phonique*



**AN-2 ROAD THROUGH THE RAIN
BOOGIE DRAMA STALKERS GROOVE
Was Not Was/GER/12**

Hailing from Hamburg, the Was Not Was label proves that Siberia and Milan have something in common—deadly effective dancefloor jams. Russia's AN-2 turns to Steve Bug for a driving slice of deep tech house with swinging percussion, but Italy's Boogie Drama responds with a tightly wound John Tejada mix and a rolling original that meshes electro bass and gritty acid with wild abandon. *Peter Nicholson*

**STROMBA GIDDY UP
Fat Cat/UK/12**

UK outfit Stromba relives the glory days of disco with "Giddy Up," a live, uptempo dance workout that evokes the less cheesy moments of classic labels such as TK Disco or West End. Things get spaced out inna rub-a-dub stylee on "Septic Skank," while "Giddy Down" proffers a stripped-down take on the title track, giving us a taste of the breadth of talent this group's clearly got. *Roy Dank*

**LEAH MCCRAE ALL THIS LOVE THAT I'M GIVING
Groovefinder/US/12
PHIL HOOTON PRESENTS TESTAMENT
KING OF KINGS
suSU/UK/12**

Indie rockers just discovering house this year through Italo-disco reissues or dollar-bin Strictly Rhythm promos from '92 might miss some of the dopeness being issued today—like '70s soul singer Gwen McCrae's daughter Leah belting out her mom's funky classic. There's something to be said for good genes and a diva's vocal range. The next step for house newbies: go to a gospel house night at the Shelter with Timmy Regisford at the decks; he'll baptize your ears with tracks like Hooton's choir-aided "King of Kings" (featuring Terry Hunter and Bang The Party mixes). *Derek Grey*

**MARK GRANT FEAT RUSSOUL THERE FOR ME
Blackstone/US/12**

Grant's soulful music shines like perfectly cut diamonds. The veteran of Cajual, Om and dozens of other labels effortlessly balances the demands for drawn-out dancefloor tracks with well-conceived songwriting, adding choruses, breakdowns and vocal filtering, along with alluring synth elements and supremely compressed drums. Vocalist Russoul isn't exceptional, but he's subtle enough to not override the track. He's also on Grant's more upfront "Girl With You" (Blackstone), but this single is the pick of the two. *Tomas*

**KAHIL EL'ZABAR'S ETHNIC HERITAGE
ENSEMBLE RUNNING IN THE STREETS
Deeper Soul/US/12
DEMARKUS LEWIS PRODIGAL SON
Vista/US/12**

Taking a rootsy, African-folk/Art Ensemble jazz original and giving it a hypnotic Detroit beatdown house treatment, Charles "Love From SF" Webster channels Moodymann for one of this year's more hypnotic deep house numbers. Likewise, Demarkus Lewis has the Midas touch this year, and "Prodigal Son" for Chicago's Vista is easily his strongest effort. Lewis plays some seriously bubbling Lonnie Liston Smith-style Rhodes chords over a jackin' Chi-town beat. I can see DJ Heather hammering this one. *Hector Cedillo*

**THE KELLEY POLAR QUARTET ROCOCO EP
Environ/US/12**

The Environ camp is far from a prolific bunch, but what they lack in quantity they sure do make up for in quality. The third Kelley Polar Quartet release ditches the vocals heard on last year's Recital EP in favor of a more accomplished instrumental affair. "Parlour Games" is the pick here, what with its energetic, plucked bassline and a distinctly housey feel. *Roy Dank*

**JUNIA OVADOSE HUBBA HUBBA
Greenhouse/US/12**

Somewhere along the line, in 2004, house producers like Jay Tripwire, Slum Science and Swirl Peeps took them crazy pills that Akufen and Booka Shade have been on for a minute now, and decided to add some choppy samples, tripped-out bleeps, juke-joint jazz riffs and downright psychotic funk to their otherwise already thick and groovy house productions. Now Junia Ovadose has found their dealer, and they send their beats and bats to the belfry. Tear your clothes off and have some fun. *Chopper*

**TONY FOSTER AFTER PARTY
Mixmode/US/12
RICK WADE NIGHT PHASES
Moods and Grooves/US/12**

Detroit house originators Tony Foster (partners with Delano Smith in Mixmode) and Rick Wade have been putting it down for a minute. And what you'll get on both these fantastic releases is house for non-conformists: jazzy grooves without the square clichés, and tough, sexy rhythms that complement late nights in dark Motown warehouse parties. Foster opts for smooth repetition, Wade for off-kilter, percussive grooves and slower motifs (à la Theo Parrish) and both deliver the goods quicker than FedEx. *Hector Cedillo*

**DAVID ASTRİ DANCING DIGITS
Soft Rocks/JK/12**

David Astrì's '80s synth-dance rarity appears on X-Press 2's recent comp *Classics* (Azuli) alongside Art of Noise, David Byrne and Voices of East Harlem, all of which provide a perfect context for the jazzy B-3 organ solos, early drum machine grooves and live bass funk of this slamin' tune. Now Soft Rocks has reissued it with a re-recording by Alice Russell (Quantic Soul Orchestra) and other guest musicians whose respectful cover can stand tall on its own merits. *Tomas*

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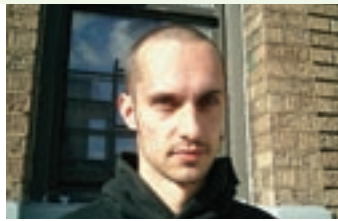
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TECHNO GUEST REVIEWS: MARK VERBOS



Pummelingly hard and menacingly dark techno will prevail as long as Mark Verbos is around. To call him prolific is an understatement. A product of the Midwest hardcore and acid scene of the early '90s, this engineering whiz has dropped dozens of vinyl releases on labels like Planet Rhythm, Drop Bass, Djax-Up-Beats and his own Simple Answer imprint. After two full-scale European tours with DJ Rush (whose raw, sinister techno sound parallels that of Verbos), this hardliner moved to Berlin in 2000 and became a DJ icon in Eastern Europe. He's since returned to Brooklyn, and he recently emailed us this missive about techno's most hardcore. *Sean O'Neal*
www.simple-answer.com

REEKO INTO THE STRUCTURE *Infrastructure/US/12*

This Spanish producer is making a big impact in dark techno circles. His premier on Dave Sumner's New York label is one of his stronger releases; the A-side is a 10-minute epic that storms through several sections on its way, each of which could have been cuts on their own. *MV*

MINIMAL 421 RAMON'S VISIT *Men in Motion/NETH/12*

Three cuts on clear vinyl showcase several mixes of "Ramon's Visit"—the original, one by Rude Awakening and one by Helsinki's Peaky Pounder. Pounder's is my pick due to its hot edits and sick kick drum, but everything in the array is awesome and heavy peak-time techno. *MV*

TIM XAVIER AN EXTENSION OF WHO I AM *773Tekno/US/12*

From Portland to Houston to Chicago to New York, Tim Xavier has had loads of releases. Here he clocks in with an exceptional showing on his own label. The B-side is more of the produced, funky fare he's known for, but I like the darker A-side, which pounds harder than we're used to hearing—real solid, mean stuff. *MV*

THE VEGETABLE ORCHESTRA REMIX TRILOGY VOL ONE *Karmarouge/GER/12*

The Vienna Vegetable Orchestra is the funkiest farmers' market in the world, turning tubers into techno and legumes into laidback grooves. (Eat that, Matmos!) Gabriel Ananda slices up the raw ingredients into a minimalist salad of beat slivers and crisp accents, the kind of thing Herbert would find nutritious. On the flip, Märtini Brös pumpkin up the jam, complete with jacked samples of Soul II Soul. *Philip Sherburne*

ETIOP SUB+ *Recognition/POL/12*

All you techno Teutonophiles, don't forget Germany's eastern neighbors in your search for minimalist omph. On his debut EP for Janek Sienkiewicz's Recognition label, Etiop parts a different kind of iron curtain, this one made of slinky metal beads, and the resultant rippling is sublime. "Structure" is a classic in the making, the missing link between Swayzak and Wighnomy Bros. *Philip Sherburne*

FACULTY X OTHERWORLD *Superbra/NETH/12*

Celebrating its 30th installation, Brian Zentz appears under the system-rockin' alias, Faculty X. Amongst garage-crafted mid-bass melodic grooves, powerful cascading pads frolic with a shimmering ensemble of strings. Expect heavy rotation from minds like Mauro Picatto, Kevin Saunderson, etc. *Praxis*

SVEN WEGNER ARE YOU LOGGED *Lebensfreude/GER/12*

With his first EP separate from his collective live project, Hamburg Deadline, Mr. Wegner starts off in a burly manner with this minimal minded electric funk jam. Establishing a heavy melodic haze throughout, the progression remains playful yet experimental while displaying an uplifting glissando lead. Superb installment, and a boastful rookie solo release. *Praxis*

MISS KITTIN REQUIEM FOR A HIT *Novamute/UK/12*

From succulent rhymes to seductively sexual appeal, this girl knows well how to live on charts worldwide. This booty-heavy breakbeat mix blends equal parts smooth melody and chunky overdriven bass. Abe Duque devours the original into his own prospective NYC enchantment. Big thumbs. *Praxis*

FRANKIE BONES UNIDENTIFIED *Kiddaz.FM/GER/12*

Taking a dirty-flanged typical Bones vocal snip, and applying it to a ghetto Technics-style deep straight shuffle, the quotient remains a useful loopy mix tool. Flip for Dietrich Schoenemann's dirt box 303 funk cut, sculpted to start the night. *Praxis*

DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: DSTAR & MASON



Dstar and Mason, two-thirds of the trinity known as Swarm (with counterpart Trust), are known for their crushing collaborations on labels such as Freak, Intasounds, Bad Habits, Eastside, Proper Talent, Metalheadz and their own GASM Recordings. These Philly natives like it dark and devastating, and have made quite a name for themselves with rough, amen-heavy riners. Their self-released mix CD, March 2004's *Enter The Hive*, is a good introduction to their punishing sound, containing 23 tracks of all original material. We tracked down these loose cannons—who were busy chopping wood behind their Pennsylvania production shack—and they gave us the rundown on the most blazing new tunes in the world of dark drum & bass. *Star Eyes*
www.gasmrecordings.com

JOHN ROLODEX CAN'T SEE ME *Tech Itch/UK/12*

Original rude bwoy sheriff John Rolodex comes through with a snapping gumbo of breaks, a ground-shaking bassline and his trademark gangsta vocal stabs. Definitely a smashing tune! The production is tight and in the same professional vein as Cartridge's "Dark Shadows." The flip, "Shut the Fuck Up," is also not to be fucked with! *Dstar*

CHASE & STATUS HOOD RAT *Bad Habit/UK/dub*

Some serious neck snappin' goin on here. Listen for the Method Man sample to get your feet stompin' to this half-step monster. Once this tune drops, the ultra-heavy subs and reece bass send you into a dutty face frenzy. This is a must-have for any headbanger! *Mason*

TECH ITCH NOTHING *Freak/UK/dub*

You will do nothing at all...except buy this release! Totally disgusting! This is Tech Itch at his finest—synths, stabs and a hypnotizing vocal intro complete this all-out war on the drums. The second drop is the killer for me, as Tech Itch changes up the beats to pound what's left of your life out of you. Horrible! *Mason*

JUJU THUNDER EP *Liquid V/UK/2x12*

A San Francisco hometown hero lends his talents to the established V Recordings label, sending up an excellent EP of dubwise selections. "Thunder" puts things in motion—heavy and dubby; sick horns roll over a juicy bassline in "Skylarking;" and "Bag O Wire" features dub samples with a fluid amen break. "Sahara Run" concludes the journey with another thick bassline and hypnotizing vocal. *4Real*

PHOTEK AND FABIO NO JOKE *Photek Productions/UK/12*

Two drum & bass legends come together to create the smooth "No Joke" featuring full vocals from Chiara. A complete contrast on the flip, "Baltimore" is without question the hardest tune Photek has ever released! Look out for the half-time breakdown matched with a dangerous reece bassline. *4Real*

CALIBRE BLUETOP *Innerground/UK/12*

Our favorite Brazilian duo, Marky and XRS, step aside to let loose some top-notch Calibre production on their Innerground label. "Bluetop" is not an instant smasher, but its twirling bleeps and chilling sounds draw you into the stripped down minimal funk that grows on you with every listen. "Gemini" elevates the vibe by pushing

deep bass through mesmerizing textures and rolling amens. Highly addictive. *Ryan Romana*

SPECIAL FORCES RINSA *Tekdbz/UK/12*

A.k.a. Photek Dubz, this new label has been set up for the release of special dubplate-only selections that have never seen the public market. This first release features the heavy rolling "Rinsa," a simple but deadly reece juggernaut. "Babylon VIP" is a dubbed out monster that has been exclusive to Photek himself for over a year and a half. Buy on sight—this label is limited to 1500 copies per press! *4Real*

KEATON & VERSE REDEMPTION *Refuge Audio/UK/12*

Keaton debuts his very own label with two devastating tunes. "Redemption," produced with MC Verse, is a positive minimal roller with plenty of dubbed out effects and energy for the floor. The flip sees Keaton & Hive crafting one of the most lethal tunes this year. A mix-friendly and slightly uplifting intro leads to a sinister frenzied drop. "No Hope?" raises the bar and the roof. *4Real*

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LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS: THE JUAN MACLEAN

The Juan MacLean was once John MacLean of Rhode Island's Six Finger Satellite, and he banged out jerky, serrated, hook-heavy jabs in an art-damaged, krautrock-influenced indie band whose soundman happened to be James Murphy (now half of New York production illuminati the DFA). Since assuming the moniker The Juan MacLean, MacLean has eschewed the analog manglings of Devo and Big Black for the clapping clip of electro's crackling but firm snare drums, flitting pings and burbling melodies. After initial singles for DFA, including a split with scratchy post-punk Chicago house enthusiasts The Rapture, The Juan MacLean has furthered the formula of stark plod into a dubby cul-de-sac, as heard on tracks like "I Robot" and "Less Than Human" (which appear on *DFA Compilation #2*). *Tony Ware*
www.dfarecords.com

WHITEY LEAVE THEM ALL BEHIND 1234/UK/12

It's all here...the stuff that makes a stir in my trousers: live-sounding drums, arpeggiator, catchy vocal hooks, distorted bass and a cool band name; like the Fat Trucker's were. This has a militant backbeat with no swing to it—it's fairly retarded and simple, just the way I like it. *JM*

BLACK LEOTARD FRONT CASUAL FRIDAY DFA/US/12

Delia and Gavin's "12" on DFA Records may be the most enduring thing the label has released to date. Utterly tasteful Germanic synth explorations that manage to sound contemporary while harkening back to when Kraftwerk was just two guys. That they've released a track evoking the golden age of Italo-disco—I know, there was no golden age of Italo-disco, but you watch...pretty soon there will be!—without sounding kitschy or ironic gives them a perfect track record, for those keeping score. And the live show features nude dancing, I hear. *JM*

BOREDOMS SEA DRUM Warner/JAP/12

You know why this is called "Sea Drum"? Because they recorded it on the beach with the drums underwater, you idiot, and it sounds fucking amazing. Jesus H. Christ, these guys have been making records since you stopped listening to Journey, so to bust out a track like this is a superhuman feat. I would close every DJ set with this. *JM*

HOT CHIP DOWN WITH PRINCE Moshi Moshi/UK/12

Do the Hot Chip guys know this sounds like early Devo? Probably not. But the absurdist vocals, robo-funky rhythm section, and two-note synth lines remind me of when I used to go to school with a lampshade on my head. This is another song with the word "motherfucker" in it, which is a word I don't think white people should use. *JM*



Photo: Tim Sater

BROWNSTUDY TELL ME MORE ABOUT BUBBLES Really Nice/US/12

Forget all the *Matrix* stylings and the razor-sharp, pseudo-techno production—hip-hop's future has not yet been written. However, Detroit's Jason Hogans has been scribbling on a few napkins, and seems to be on to something. This EP is steeped in potent analog/digital blends and a master's thesis in beat programming, but it's an intense, soul-searching narrative that propels this record forward. *Dan Sisko*

EARLY B HISTORY King Jam/JAM/7

A genius producer in Kingston dug up this long-unheard reel with deejay Doctor Early B chatting on it. The slow, bassy riddim sounds like a Channel One, Roots Radics sin'ting—the kind of jam that Eek-A-Mouse or Yellowman and Fathead would ride—and Early B delivers an intelligent, plainspoken account of slavery and its repercussions in Jamaica. With an Earl Dunkley track also available on said version, this makes a visit to your dub vendor essential. *Dub ID*

THE DUDS THE LSMPOY DESMOND POT AND THE DES-POTS Eeriephone/UK/3X7

Another genre defying, lo-fi loving, folksy, Moogsy, not-afraid-of-singing 7" label! The Duds do deadpan humorous tales of synth-folk. The Large Slow-Maturing Pigs of Yorkshire offer more of the same, but a wee more wryly clubby while Desmond Pot offers up, ummm, more of the same but in a slightly dub fashion. These might be all the same person. And all the better for it. *Brian Paul*

MILKY GLOBE ODE TO A BEATBOX Lo/UK/12

Lo Recordings' creative director Jon Tye (a.k.a. MLO, 2 Player, Twisted Science) returns with Luke Vibert and Daniel Pemberton alongside him for a fantastic taste of ambient space funk. As if the original wasn't potent enough, Tye's roped in Russia's Scsi-9 and EU, plus The Advent's Mr. G for splendidly melodic beat symphony reworks, just in the nick of time to soothe our war-weary souls. Bravo chaps! *Tomas Palermo*

EL GATO #9 LIBERTY EP El Otro Mundo/US/12

The fourth release on Nor Cal's EOM label sees DJ and producer Christopher Leath unleashing a dark bit of experimental techno. Recalling the halcyon days of labels like Reflective, Apollo and others, when the lines of distinction between genres of techno and ambient were still fuzzy, the Cat merges techno, acid, breaks, ambient and experimental IDM with lo-fi political samples and haunted synths. As unsettling as it is unpretentious, "Liberty" should provoke a reaction wherever it's aired. *Derek Grey*

ONETHEMA STICKS FOR BITS Underscan/GER/12

Another music revolution is being ushered in by producers like 20-year-old London resident Simon Petre (Onethema) who've grown up using downloaded music software (shareware). Creating radical electronic sounds outside the confines of traditional sequencing programs, manuals or interfaces, Petre incorporates processing mistakes in his neo-classical, minimalist, splattering ambient sound explosions. Thorny listening for sure, but revolution is never comfortable. *Derek Grey*

HIP HOP LABEL PROFILE: DJ TRAFIK



There's a huge hip-hop scene that's been brewing in Eastern Europe over the last few years—just look at the annual Hip-Hop Kemp festival (www.hiphopkemp.cz), which drew 13,000 fans this year with an international line-up that included DJ Vadim, Killa Kella, Lootpack and tons of Czech hip-hop crews and artists. Holding it down at the festival was Prague's 24-year-old DJ Trafik. Though he's only been a turntablist for four years, he performs as part of rap outfit PSH, does cuts on tons of Czech hip-hop releases and has won a slew of titles in the ITF Eastern Hemisphere battles. We tracked Trafik down and, through an interpreter, got the lowdown on what album cuts have had the biggest influence on him. *Mark Mizerdel*

ERICK SERMON CHILL TOWN NEW YORK Motown/US/CD

Personally, I think everyone should be able to put together their own beats, and Sermon does this flawlessly on this well-balanced album. Plus, the quality of his flow is undisputable. To me, this is of the most essential albums of 2004. My favorite cuts off the record are "Chillin' (feat. Talib Kweli)" and "Whip" to rock a party, and "Like Me (feat. Sy Scott & Khari)" for home listening. *DJ Trafik*

DJ WICH TIME IS NOW Mad Drum/CZ/CD

This is the debut LP from the number one hip-hop producer in the Czech Republic that's about to hit the streets. A number of quality guest appearances, including the US' K-Otix in the lead backed by Czech, Slovakian and Polish rappers. This album also includes the local female talents of Tina and Misha—the collab track they did is smashing! Watch out for this one! *DJ Trafik*

BLACK EYED PEAS BEHIND THE FRONT Interscope/US/CD

This 1998 album is slightly older, but musically timeless. It's unbelievable that six years have passed since its release in 1998. Will.I.Am's production is tight, yet every track he delivers is different. He doesn't fear experimenting with the sound and samples. My tips off this one would be "Joints and Jams," "Fallin' Up" and "Positivity." Lyrically, this album has its off moments, but you can't find anything to fault with BEP's production. *DJ Trafik*

GIANT PANDA RACIST Tres/US/12

Joining the ranks of real-and-true hip-hop groups—Starving Artists Crew, Crown City Rockers and The Procussions—are Maanumental, Newman, Chikaramanga, Super Brush 427 and Sir Kado, who form Giant Panda. "With It" features early-Tribe-style beats and smooth Main Source-type flows. "GP Y'all" is head-nodic and clappable with funky horn samples, but they save their best for "Racist," which could be a circa-'90 conscious rap anthem. It explores everyone's inner racist with stereotypes about blacks, whites, Hispanics and Asians spit over a 114bpm break. Tight! *Rob Dalo*

THE PERCEPTIONISTS MEMORIAL DAY Definitive Jux/US/12

How come hip-hop ain't done an out-right truth-about-Iraq song yet? Ah yeah, here it is—leave it to Mr. Lif, Akrobatik and Fakts One to ask "Where are the weapons of mass destruction?" Flip for a humorous slice-of-life on the up-tempo number "Career Finders," featuring Digital Underground's Humpty Hump riffing and dissing on the prospects of under-skilled and lazy job applicants. Ironic rap with a moral message? Been a while since we've heard something this on-point. *Rob Dalo*

KOOLADE FEATURING MASTA ACE BEAUTIFUL LIKWIT JUNKIES DARK ENDS ABB/US/12

Masta Ace raps about how life can be "Beautiful" while the equally engaging El Da Sensei comes with the realness on "Follow," both over Croatian (Toph One-holla!) producer Koolade's butter beats. Somehow Kool's introspective soul claps don't suit Ace's positive mood, but the stutter-step drums of "Follow" fit Sensei like a fresh-pressed gi-loose but functional. Meanwhile, Defari, Babu and Rakaa reminisce about trife LA life on Likwit Junkies' "Dark Ends." Damn, how times haven't changed (much). *Tomas*

CHESTER COPPERPOT TAKE 'N' OVER EV Productions/US/12

Roxbury representer Edo G absolutely rips the marimba-laced beat on "Take 'N' Over," proving that he still gotta have it (and ain't above takin' it by force). He transforms what might have otherwise been a light-hearted track into a "y'all don't want it" anthem. Chicago's Copperpot crosses the pond for the B-side's collaboration, tapping UK MC Moneygrip for "Braintax," but lines like "You're a wanker" and "I'm Simon Cowell on the mic" will never fly on the West Side (of the Atlantic). *Ross Hogg*

BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: FRIENDLY



The nu-skool breaks scene is full of pranksters, and Friendly (Andrew Kornweibel) fits right in. And you could say his fondness for sex-related track titles ("Fetish," "2Black2Gay," "S&M") has helped his tracks fly off the racks, but it's really the party-ready, bassbin-shattering beats contained within. This Australian nutter (now based in East London) is most closely affiliated with the Fat! Records camp, for whom he released the album *Ten Things You Need to Know About Friendly* earlier this year. Still, he gets around, recording for TCR, doing bootleg remixes of classics by LFO and SL2 for the breaks heads, and working with Smithmonger, Simply Jeff and Deekline's Booty Bouncer project. Here, the affable chap reviews a selection of new breaks jams that are guaranteed to be dancefloor (not to mention DJ) friendly. *Vivian Hoof*

www.thefatclub.com, www.tcr.co.uk

NICK THAYER & BASS KLEPH MR. ANDERSON Breaking Point/AUST/12

These guys are my favorite Australian breaks producers, and this track is the bomb! It's got an awesome groove, riding the line between breaks and house nicely, with a cut-up vocal over the top that keeps twisting over the beat, driving the track along. Awesome! *Friendly*

STANTON WARRIORS KEEP HOPE ALIVE white/UK/CD

This is a CD-R the Stantonons gave me, and it's dope—steppy breaks and a punchy bassline with a Jesse Jackson speech over the top. I played this in the US when I was out there, and the politics behind Jesse's speech took it to a new level for me. *Friendly*

SOUL OF MAN SHAKE 'EM (JACK) Finger Lickin'/UK/12

A nice funk burner from Justin and Jem, and it's one for the laaaadies! Like a marriage between Kool & The Gang, disco house and Soul of Man's particular brand of breakbeat, it's a quality tune with warmth and funk and a hip shakin' groove. *Friendly*

RENNIE PILGREM CELEB TCR/UK/12

Rennie's *Pilgrimage* full-length was undoubtedly a 2004 breakbeat highlight, and the solidly independent producer doesn't let up on this single. "Celeb" finds MC Chickaboo railing against the vapid culture of stardom that takes up far too much of our time. Both Pilgrem's original funky horns mix and Smithmonger's darker dub version make for another A-class release from TCR. *Derek Grey*

DJ DISTANCE REPLICANT Boka/UK/12

Rinse FM's Distance shares DJ slots in London clubs with heavies like the The Bug, Digital Mystikz and Horsepower Productions, whose influences show up on these three gritty tracks. Standouts "Dark Crystal" and "Roots" are superb minimal dubstep replete with exotic African and Indian percussion, slithering basslines and echoing flutes. Spacious and foreboding, this is essential sound system pressure. *Tomas*

VEX'D LION Subtext/UK/12

Thing you gotta love about Vex'd's tracks are always a lot more complex and punchy than your average break-step. His latest two-tracker (being played out by J Da Flex and Oris Jay) features intricate drums that mingle with buzzing, weaving yellowjacket bass drops. "Lion" is distorted ragga/grime breaks that prowls tensely before opening its

sharp jaws and swallowing any dancer in its path. Gwaan mi lion! *Chopper*

BOABINGA & ID THE FEELING Hardcore Beats/UK/12

On a label that brings unadulterated, over-modulated, Godzilla-sized breakbeat tracks every goddamn release it's always a treat to see how they'll outdo themselves each time. Both sides of this lead-weight heavy single feature backhoe-digging beats and sizzling basslines, and for added chaos the track changes sounds and patterns every four bars—fucking mental. Take your Dramamine and dance to this. *Chopper*

EDSKI CALYPSKI Spoit Rotten/UK/12

Somewhere in between all the grime, breakstep and experimental dub lies that original party blueprint for 2-step garage, an infectious blend of sub-bass-saturated sped-up house beats that popped champagne bottles around the globe for a few years. It's four/four tracks like Edski's that recall the novel vibe of the genre's dawning, with his ragga-influenced steppy rhythms, a swinging house groove and even acid-synths to spice it up. Like an Oakland Raiders throwback jersey—we want more music like this. *Tomas*

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**FUTURE JAZZ
GUEST REVIEWS:
VENOM**

Daniel Maunick—better known for his productions under the DJ Venom, Vipersquad and Difusion aliases—has broken beat in his blood. His father, Jean-Paul (“Bluey”) Maunick, is a member of well-respected acid jazz/funk stalwarts Incognito. The pair often collaborates on production projects—they’ve worked with Azymuth, Maxi Priest and Faithless, pushed nu-jazz forward under the name Para:Diso, and the younger Maunick has been known to add a streetwise bit of drum programming to the latest Incognito releases. Fresh off DJ dates in Korea, we asked Venom—whose own productions update bossa, jazz and funk with neck-snapping off-the-block beats—to fill us in on what’s burning up the speakers in his North London studio. *Vivian Hoat* www.arision.net

BUGZ IN THE ATTIC BOOTY (LA LA) V2/UK/CD-R

The Bugz crew is back with another dancefloor destroyer! A phat, sleazy boogie groove with a ridiculous bassline and ‘80s stabs thumps along to some of the catchiest crazy vocals I’ve heard for a while. Guaranteed to rock any club, this could be the track to take them from the underground to the mainstream. Look out for it on the *Got The Bug* remix compilation album on V2, and later as a 12”. *Venom*

3 CHAIRS I WONDER WHY 3 Chairs/US/12

Harking back to the days of Fingers Inc., Theo Parrish, Malik Pittman, Rick White and Moodymann drop a slice of dirty Detroit techno soul: 4/4 kicks, old skool 909 hats and killa synth Rhodes bounce along in typical Theo style, but it’s the haunting vocals from Bill Beaver that send the track out of this world! Hypnotic from start to finish, this is one for those that like it deep. *Venom*

SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS HOLLYWOOD unknown/US/CD-R

SA-RA has exploded on the scene with their production work (for Jill Scott, Pharoahe Monch and Common, to name a few), but they are set to take over in 2005. Mad electronic synth basses and bells gyrate against sick bouncin’ drums as way-out-left vocals float over the rhythms on some futuristic Rick James vs. Spacek shit! *Venom*



BREAK REFORM WAITING

Abstract Blue/UK/12
Break Reform joins Spacek and Josée in redefining what UK soul is all about. Singing over decidedly leftfield jazz-IDM motifs, the duo brings a subtle sepia tone to their fog-drenched compositions. Their melancholia suits remixer Domu perfectly, as he switches to downtempo fractured hip-hop gear for another sublime and essential offering. *Derek Gray*

NOVO TEMPO MEETS EURASIAN SUITE 2

Eurasian Suite/JPN/12
The six-piece Novo Tempo live jazz ensemble share sides across the oceans with Japan’s Koichi Ozaki. Live and electronic jazz styles abound, from Novo’s “Carmo” (cinematic soul/broken beats reworked by Brick & Piknik) to Ozaki’s Kyoto Jazz Massive-esque “Dagnet” (a superb, swinging live bossa-jazz ‘n’ house number featuring cascading piano solos). International cooperation has never sounded as harmonious. *Tomas*

**FLOWRIDERS PHEROMONE
STEREO TWINS FORWARD E-MOTION**

4Lux/ NETH/12
Rotterdam’s 4Lux keeps dropping the solid broken beats, but here they remind us they ain’t no one trick pony. A taste of the Flowriders’ forthcoming long-player serves up tasty, laid-back soul before some devastatingly bassy re-rubs from Quant and David Borsu. While Stereo Twins’ first single delivers mixes in both stuttered and deep techno flavors, while the B-side is a four on the floor journey into gorgeous space. Watch 4Lux—they mean business! *Peter Nicholson*

BRAZILIAN GIRLS LAZY LOVER

Verve/US/12
Smoke straight past the original and freemix versions and listen in awe to a true production master at work. Matthew Herbert cuts through the lounge vibes, keeping only the dreamy vocals of Sabina. Happily intact, they sit pretty on top of a nervous 4/4 beat, layers of moog-like keys, strings and the chopped-up remains of the original. The resulting six minutes of folky Brazilian funk are sublime. *Franz Carr*

MOODY ALLEN EXTRA MILE

Flyin’ High/NETH/12
The Dutch massive at Flyin High really comes through on the future soul tip. “Extra Mile” from the Moody Allen quartet kills it on the Rhodes, alongside deft beats and a funky-as-hell bassline. NY’s Rha Goddess does her soul vocals just right. Meanwhile, David Borsu grooves it up a bit with some respectable remix action. *Velanche*

**HAJIME YOSHIZAWA VERAO NO AR
PLEJ LAY OF THE LAND**

Exceptional/UK/12
Yoshizawa is Japan’s leading multi-instrumentalist, programmer and bandleader (Sleepwalker), in addition to lending his keyboard virtuosity to Mondo Grosso and Kyoto Jazz Massive. His fingers fly like hummingbirds on the Brazilian vocal number “Verao No Ar” (“I Am With You”)—which features a sprightly alternate organ solo version. Yoshizawa owns the black and white ivory! Meanwhile Sweden’s Plej (pron. “play”) offers us a melancholic, soul-drenched house tune with Ernesto’s crooning, and a peak-performance Jimpster broken rub. *Derek Gray*

ROSALIA DE SOUZA FICA MAL COM DEUS

Schema/ITA/12
Top bossa boys Schema enlist the likes of the trio Trüby and Simone “Big Bang” Serritella to beef up the beats. While the BB mix is a tasty laid-back late night foot shuffler, it’s Trüby Trio who claims gold here with a mix that goes the extra mile. Starting out all pretty piano, Brazilian vocals and rubbery bassline, the track evolves into a darker boomin’ club biscuit worthy of top o’ the night play. *Franz Carr*

PIXEL DO YOU MISS ME?

Counterpoint/UK/12
Kwesi Davies is Pixel, and on this vinyl-only release the title track is a good representation of his signature brand of spaced-out, groovy house. “Grippin To Dirt...” brings a tough broken rhythm. For more of this fresh approach to future house, seek out his debut album, *People Needs People*. Pixel is destined to be far more than just a blip on the screen. *Velanche*

**FIVE CORNERS QUINTET
DIFFERENT CORNERS EP**

Ricky-Tick/FIN/12
The silky smooth vibe of 1960s-era bossa nova, Latin jazz and swizzle-stick Cubop is on full display from Helsinki’s Five Corners Quintet. Featuring members from NuSpirit Helsinki and the Jimi Tenor Group, the Different Corners EP serves up a plateful of cocktail-hour delights, especially Nicola Conte’s swinging Samba Version of “Three Corners” and Dharmacone’s old style drum & bass remix of “The Devil Kicks.” *Tim Pratt*



PHOTO Christopher Woodcock

“XLR8R , keeping us out of trouble and on the double.”
-Alexis, Tussle drummer



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XLR8R incite



LUCKY 13
BY TOPH ONE

Inertia: The will of an object to continue doing what it's currently doing; i.e: objects in motion want to stay in motion, objects at rest want to remain at rest. Some of the things I'd rather be doing instead of writing this Lucky 13 include: reading the classic Japanese travel novel *Shank's Mare* as this Pacific storm thunders overhead; watching Jim Jarmusch's *Coffee & Cigarettes* all curled up on the couch with a sweet young thang; writing a love letter to Reas' style; perfecting my guacamole recipe; going back to sleep. But I suppose duty calls, and there's some pretty amazing shit to talk about this month, so...

1) MASTER MOSQUITO "THE ENDLESS WINTER EP" (Bastard Jazz/US/12) Texas meets Brooklyn on "Sackett Street Stitches (Hydro's Southside Soul Revival Mix)" courtesy of the perennially funky Hydroponic Soundsystem, and that joint's enough to keep yer ass bumpin all winter long. Also keep your eyes open for another limited Bastard Jazz 7"—this one from Jugoe's strange and hilarious "Days in Dub" remix/sample project featuring themes and vocals from the daytime classic *Days of Our Lives*. No shit.

2) GALT MACDERMOT "IN FILM" (Kilmarnock/US/2xLP) Talented and versatile beyond words, this is the cat responsible for both the musical *Hair* and Busta Rhymes' "Whoo-Haa! (Got You All in Check)." Suitable for grooving out to his incredible funk fusions, or join the ranks of Pete Rock, Buckwild, Juju and Lord Finesse in finding sampled gold in his tunes.

3) DJ JESTER THE FILIPINO FIST & QUAD ROD "TABLE FOR ONE" (Fever Pitch/US/CD) Willie Nelson fan, Kid Koala tourmate and Texas prankster of growing repute waxes melancholic on the sad nature of relationships and breakups. Another little slice of genius from Mike Pendon and Wisconsin's encyclopedic *Fever Pitch* magazine/label. Barkeep—another gin & juice for me & the Filipino Fist!

4) RITON "SQUARE EYES" (Grand Central/UK/12) Riton kills it with a thumping electro-trash stomper that turns into a lost '80s vocal gem about midway through. And check the entire upcoming Grand Central catalog—Boca 45, Fingathing, Mark Rae remixes by Kraak & Smaak and Blackbeard—all crucial mid-tempo heat.

5) SA-RA CREATIVE PARTNERS "DOUBLE DUTCH" B/W "DEATH OF A STAR" (Ubiquity/US/12) Already one of the most talked about LPs of the new year, this first 12" should be out by the time you read this, and shows a good cross-section of the stabbing minimal hip-hop and futuristic funk the trio is building a huge reputation for.

6) ADVENTURE TIME "GLASS BOTTOM BOATS" (Plug Research/US/12) Remixes from Nobody and Caural add to the cloudy, deep sea vibe already prevalent in Adventure Time's musical excursions—a trip I'm always ready to embark on, complete with my little Greek fisherman's hat and a jar of Valium.

7) RONDO BROTHERS "SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA" (Coup de Grace/US/12) Former San Franciscans and Automator cohorts Jim Greer and Brandon Arnovick make beautiful, fun soul music with steel guitars and ukeleles. From the label: "...we are leaving the hot dusty madness of Southern

California and headed for greener shores. Pele is calling us into her arms, into the way of the mystic, the way of space, the way of the rondo." Godspeed, sweet children!

8) SUBTLE "F.K.O." (Lex/UK/12) Melodic as the Cocteau Twins, with a stuttering beat and Jel & DoseOne's vocals reminiscent of a Majestic record, Lex comes once again with a perplexing and fearless release. Lovely reworkings by Console and B. Fleischmann push the envelope even further.

9) THE DEAL "NEW LAND" (Earth Project/UK/12) One of the finest Afrobeat-house records I've ever had the pleasure to lay on a turntable, this gem can work a Latin-Afrobeat dancefloor or a breaks/2-step party with equal aplomb.

10) KUDU "BOOM BOOM" (white/US/12) Could these be the same electro-vixens who dropped "I've Been Hit" in 2001 and then disappeared off the face of BerWilliamsburg? (see Lucky 13, issue #55) My god—they're back and rocking shit harder than ever! And for more of a Gary Numan dancefloor vibe flip the Black Blonde mix. Hottt!

11) NIAMAJ "THE VIBE" (Plug Label/US/12) Classic-sounding NYC hip-hop from Niamaj and producer/ DJ Kero One. File with Azeem and a handful of other cats raised on L.O.N.S., Pharcyde, Tribe and Main Source who are coming correct in the new millenium.

12) TALIB KWELI "I TRY" (Rawkus/US/12) Oh yeah, and then there's this guy, with basically the sequel to "Get By," also produced by Kayne West, and featuring Mary J. Blige. Yep, just buy it.

LUCKY 13) DISTORTION 2 STATIC (San Francisco/TV show) Picking up where *Home Turf* left off some 15 years ago, these young cats are blowing up WB20 with local and national videos, interviews, guest DJs and hip-hop culture every Saturday afternoon at 4 p.m. Props, fellas—keep on rockin'!

TophOne's mix CD *Live, Loud & Dirty* is available at www.fabric8.com/redwine.



THE BLAST ZONE
BY DJ ENKI



DJ Enki In deep consternation.

•Actual note scribbled on a napkin and passed to the homie DJ Platurm while he was in the mix: "Can you play 1) Lil' Jon 2) Ying-Yang Twins 3) "Hyphy" 4) Ludacris 5) Anything hip-hop?" I saw this note hung up on his fridge and chuckled at the last request in particular. I asked him what he was playing when he got the note, and he said, "I didn't play anything but hip-hop all night." Of course. People, please use at least some common sense when making requests. Don't request what's already playing.

•When normal people take a vacation from work, they take it easy, lounge around, sleep late, maybe take a nice relaxing trip somewhere. Record nerds take vacations so that we can go out of town and search through record bins in different locales. Don't even try to tell me this is normal behavior.

•Saw my man Z-Trip open up for Dave Matthews Band at Golden Gate Park. Go ahead and read that sentence again if you need to. The show was certainly a different scene: a lot less fake jewelry from icedoutgear.com, jauntily cocked baseball hats, and strip club-tested dance moves, but a lot more wooing, trustafarians, frat rush T-shirts and bell-bottom hip-huggers. I will say this, though: Dave Matthews' drummer is ill. All you producers out there—set your samplers to "granola" and start loopin'!

•If your workday is getting dreary, liven up the proceedings by saying everything in Cypress Hill front-man B-Real's voice.

•In closing, Principal Blackman for president. Comprenez-vous, mi muchacho?

TOP FIVE UPTEMPO DANCEFLOOR BURNERS TO SPRING ON A CROWD:

AlphaZeta "Everything's Different" (Future Primitive Sound) DJ Zeph cooks up a bumpin', beautifully bouncy track, and Azeem bumps and bounces right along with it, giving one of the best vocal performances of the year. Seriously, don't get caught sleeping on this one.

Earflaps vs. Chamkile & Amarjot "Ley Ja Kite Door" (Slept On) The most bangingest bhanga joint around. Booming low-end with a booty-shaking beat.

James Brown "Give It Up or Turnit A Loose (Jungle Groove remix)" (Polydor) I had to get one timeless classic on this list. If you set it up right then run the whole "Clap your hands-uh! Stomp your feet-uh!" conga breakdown, the place will explode when Clyde comes back in pounding on those drums. I don't know why more people aren't still playing this one.

Sway & Tech "Devastating (remix)" (Big Beat) Yeah, that's MTV's in-house dread Sway on the mic back when he was rockin' the high-top fade, but it's all about Joe muhfuckin' Quixx on the remix keeping the progressions hot. Sadly, they don't make records like this anymore.

Kool Moe Dee "Rise and Shine" (Jive) Definitely a dollar-bin gem. The beat has so many nice changes and bridges and whatnot, it's powerful. And you can even feel good about playing the vocals.



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IN THE STUDIO DZIHAN & KAMIEN

The Austrian production duo makes us ask, "Is it live, or is it D&K?"

With a studio and keyboard arsenal that would make Herbie Hancock proud, Viennese duo Dzhian & Kamien makes electronic music with their fingers rather than a mouse. Their latest release, *Live in Vienna* (Couch-Six Degrees), proves that D&K is equally adept on stage as they are in the studio, with songs from 2003's *Gran Riserva* performed by a live band, complete with a string section from Istanbul. As **Vlado Dzhian** was spending time with his newborn baby, we spoke with **Mario Kamien** about their setup.

What kind of gear do you use in the studio?

We spend almost every Euro on equipment, apart from the diapers for Vlado's newborn kid. Our studio is loaded with analog keyboards like the Juno 106, the Jupiter 8, two Fender Rhodes (Mark I&II), two Wurliizers, two Clavinet D6, three drum sets (two custom Viennese sets and a '70s Gretsch set), two Akai MPC 3000s, several guitars and basses, almost all Lovetone boxes, three Neumann U67 mics, a Fender Bassman Amp, a Vibro King Amp, Universal Audio Preamps and Millennia Preamps, a Sony DMX-R 100 mixing console, two ProTools setups, Apple Logic Pro, and most importantly, some whistles and a tambourine. We'd eventually like to get a Neve or SSL console and a Studer tape recorder.

Do you prefer software or other kinds of recording media?

We love the analog sound, and after a few more bank holdups, we will go for the pure vintage sound. Only kidding of course, but we combine the advantages of the digital age, such as editing and manipulation, while making sure to always look for the analog warmth and soulfulness. For us, ProTools works great, and there are great plug-ins and features. In combination with good analog equipment, we have a very powerful setup.

What piece of analog equipment could you not live without?

Coffee, wine, food, soccer, U67 Neumann mics, real drums, basses, guitars and tube amplifiers—everything that makes authentic sound or noise and is creative.

Words: Jesse Terry
Photo: Lisi Gradnitzer

What is it that makes a two person production team successful? What roles do each of you play in the studio?

With a two-person team, you never get lonesome. It's your partner, the computer screen and yourself. Secondly, and more seriously, we have four ears to listen with, a positive sense of competition, the joy of playing and jamming together, mutual consultation and exchange, as well as bad and good jokes. Basically, everybody can do everything, two pilots or two stewardesses, so to say.

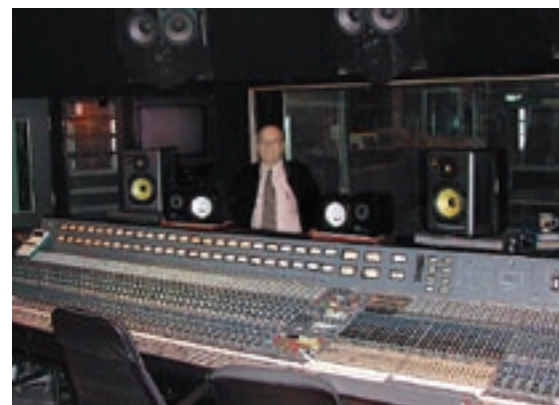
Do you prefer the control of the studio or the full band live setting? What do you like/dislike about each?

We love both situations and even in the studio we go back to almost 97.33333333-percent live recording set up. Then again, the live music on stage is a totally different thing but probably the most fun of all.

What has DJing taught you as trained musicians?

DJing is an important experience. Sometimes as musicians you think too musically; you lose focus. Then there's the DJ approach, helpful in the sense of combining things without too much respect or being too academic. [You're] not going like, 'Can I do this? Can I do that?' You just mix it, and things happen which couldn't be done from an instrumental point of view.

www.couchrecords.com, www.sixdegreesrecords.com



In Dzhian & Kamien's dream studio (left to right): Neve console (pictured, Rupert Neve), SSL console at a Swiss recording hall and a Studer tape recorder.



"WE LOVE THE ANALOG SOUND, AND AFTER A FEW MORE BANK HOLDUPS, WE WILL GO FOR THE PURE VINTAGE SOUND."

AUTOMATE YOUR ANALOG

Even the most digital-minded technician must someday enter the world of analog, just as the cable-junkie analog dork will eventually dip into the binary realm. Whether you mix from your analog desk onto your computer or cut a vinyl disc from a track you twiddled in Cubase, music mediums and audio formatting are partners in every electronic musician's study.

I am heavily rooted in the purest of analog production, focusing on analog modular synthesizers (Moog, Sequential, Roland, etc.), analog sequenced drum machines (909, 808, 606, etc.), outboard analog effects (Sherman, Frostwave, Metasonix, etc.) and pure analog mixing consoles (Mackie 32*8, etc.).

Sequencing can be tricky and monotonous with hardware, but oftentimes well worth the torturous slave labor involved. However, the era in which I slave my rig to the PC has finally come. Seven years of complete hardware production has irrevocably merged with the strength of the Pentium processor. I have been using music-producing software for years, and repeatedly faced the ultimate dilemma of digital/analog sequencer sync—always the electronic musician's nastiest nightmare. MIDI sequencing from a computer to synth has existed since Roland mated a DIN connection with Sequential in 1981; however, timing an analog sequencer (i.e. 909, 808) with that of a computer is difficult even today.

I tried Orion, Cubase and Cakewalk, but each platform threw me hurdle after mundane hurdle, leaving my refined studio productions sounding more like sneakers in the dryer. For me, the divine solution was **Emagic's Logic**. Logic offers more MIDI power than any program available, and its modular design integrates compensation for all of your inevitable latencies. Here are some tips for making Logic run smoothly with your analog gear:

1. Add a few blank measures to the beginning of your playlist. This ensures your lagging hardware time to catch up.
2. Save, Close, Reopen. A lot can be said for reinitializing your MIDI and ASIO device drivers.
3. Transcend your porn sites. The Internet is an evil place for the pure soul of an audio PC. Reinstall your OS and disable all bloated network properties. *Praxis*



THE ERA IN WHICH I SLAVE MY RIG TO THE PC HAS FINALLY COME.



QUICKIE: NUMEROLOGY

For wishy-washy musicians who can't decide between their newest software synthesizer and their beautiful analog keyboard, **Numerology** gives you the best of both worlds, and a whole lot more. This modular software application can control parameters of both hardware and Audio Unit synthesizers and effects, and can send or create extremely complicated MIDI information. Imagine having your step sequencer control another sequencer that controls a reverb decay which controls...you get the picture.

Pros: Gain control over digital and analog.

Cons: Mac only. Impossible to understand if you have a small brain.

Jeoss Terry

Numerology MSRP: \$85; www.five12.com

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MONITOR YOUR WORLD

No matter how grand your vintage synth museum may be, and regardless of how speedy your latest plug-in runs, your audio recreation relies solely upon the accuracy of your studio monitors. The studio monitors offered by pro-audio companies today are designed around flat-frequency response, whereas all frequencies within your mix are equally amplified, providing you with a clearer picture. Several manufacturers have focused on bringing the technology of high-end studios to the bedroom atmosphere without forfeiting rent.

M-Audio has developed a cost-effective solution with their **Studiophile BX8** bi-amplified reference monitors. Housing an eight-inch mineral-filled polypropylene low-frequency driver, a one-inch silk high-frequency tweeter and a 130-watt active amplifier fashioned specifically to match, the stereo field remains as hygienic as a surgeon's scalpel. Speakers of smaller diameter tend to lack cavernous lows, but an eight-inch woofer serves up powerful subs.

Alesis recently created a six and a half-inch woofer with matched one-inch tweeter that seems to push the envelope of a sub eight-inch monitor. The **M1 Active** bi-amplified monitors have the offset tweeter made with a traditional silk dome; however, the real tech attribute is the carbon fiber coned woofer. Since the carbon material is 25 percent lighter than polypropylene, it provides a quicker transient response time, yielding an earlier reaction in the bass as well as living up the upper registers.

Whatever your mix application may be, improvements within your audio's stereo imaging will only advance the quality of your sound. *Praxis*

M-Audio Studiophile BX8 MSRP: \$599; www.m-audio.net

Alesis M1 Active Mk II MSRP: \$649; www.alesis.com

YOUR AUDIO RECREATION RELIES SOLELY UPON THE ACCURACY OF YOUR STUDIO MONITORS.



QUICKIE: CREATIVE LABS ZEN TOUCH

If you don't subscribe to the white-earplug-sporting iPod club, there are great alternatives in the MP3 Player marketplace. **Creative Labs Zen Touch** MP3 player has all the goodies: a 20 Gigabyte drive (for up to 5,000 MP3s) and a battery that lasts 24 hours. In other words, listen to whatever you want, whenever you want, wherever you want. *Jesse Terry*

Pros: With an additional remote control, you can record audio and listen to FM radio.

Cons: You probably won't get that job or date if you don't have a trendy iPod.

Creative Labs Zen Touch MSRP: \$249.99; us.creative.com

PLASTIK MIDI

MIDI. It's a word that evokes images of keyboard players in spandex playing new age and prog-rock epics. But with the advent of software synthesizers and studios, producers and even guitarists are grudgingly admitting to MIDI's useful qualities. The **Allen & Heath X-One:92** is a full-fledged DJ mixer but it's also got MIDI control—each knob, slider and button can also send MIDI information. If, like **Richie Hawtin**, you're a DJ who likes to mix vinyl, MP3s and audio from your computer, this mixer lets it all happen. Users of Native Instruments Traktor, Propellerheads Reason or Ableton Live, rejoice. This is the DJ mixer for you. Mr. Hawtin tells us how it came about:

"I met [chief architect and designer of Allen & Heath mixers] Andy Rigby-Jones at the [Audio Engineering Society] show in New York a few years back. I quickly had a [A&H] mixer at my house and tested it. I had been using a Vestax PMC50 mixer for about two years. I'd been taking my own mixer to all my gigs since around 1998 because of the special setups I've done since the early days of *Decks, EFX & 909* (Novamute).

"A&H had a better mixer and with its stock unit setup there were more possibilities than the Vestax. I started using the X-One:62 at all my gigs, and [Andy and I] started making modifications. First we added an extra AUX send so I could have more control and flexibility, and then we changed some of the other EQ channels and added some other bits.

"After this I started to need more control for all the new equipment I was adding. My dad, an audio engineer, stepped in to help add new functions to the X-One:62. We replaced one of the audio channels with MIDI knobs and faders and added some trigger MIDI buttons on the side to allow me to control the Apple laptop. These were all controlled by a Doepfer MIDI brain that we put inside the unit. This was the basic first version of what we called the CTRL:62.

"A&H started to get lots of emails from people who wanted a CTRL:62...but couldn't really do anything, because it was so custom and basically hand built. We started talking about their new update to the 62, called the X-One:92.

"It was a great step for the consumer market, but in reality not as flexible as what we had built into the CTRL:62, so we went back into the shop, this time with A&H direct, and decided to make a modified version of the X-One:92. We took some things off/out, added some more AUX's, and updated and built on more MIDI functions so that it would surpass my CTRL:62. That became the CTRL:92, the most powerful mixer/MIDI controller combination on the planet." *Jesse Terry*

Allen & Heath X-One:92 MSRP: \$1820; www.allen-heath.com, www.richiehawtin.com

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MICROSTORAGE

Looking for a recorder that can deliver high quality audio in a small package? The **Zoom PS04** and **Edirol R1** can help you out. Both have removable storage (Smart Media for the Zoom, Compact Flash for the Edirol) and no spinning drives, which makes for exceptionally quiet recording and long battery life, at the cost of a lack of much memory. For those who have learned the hard way that MiniDisc players are extremely fragile, no moving parts is a good thing. Both come with built-in microphones and a bevy of internal effects.

With the Edirol R1, you can record in both Wav and MP3 formats—a huge plus if you’re a vinyl DJ who wants to make the switch to MP3 without the hassle of recording into your computer and converting formats. 24-bit recording is perfect for audio enthusiasts.

The Zoom PS04 doesn’t have MP3 capabilities, but it does have multi-tracking. This is one of the smallest four-track recorders in history, and it’s also got a stereo drum track and a bass track, each with hundreds of presets from a virtual instrument set. It’s a great song sketchbook for musicians on the move. Record submixes from your live show, bring it to the rehearsal studio, record a jam, edit four track recordings while sitting on the bus or whatever else you want to do.

Jesse Terry

Edirol R1 MSRP: \$550; www.edirol.com

Zoom PS04 MSRP: \$359; www.zoom.co.jp



NO MOVING PARTS IS A GOOD THING.



ENTER THE SONOSPHERE

As consumers decide which medium/format/shape/color they want to receive their music in, it becomes problematic just to listen to a tune in your own house. Sonos has developed a solution for MP3 lovers who don’t want to sit in front of their computer to listen to their latest illegal downloads. The **Sonos Digital Music System** lets you control your MP3 selection from the palm of your hand, wherever you go in your house. Comprised of a wireless hand-held remote with an LCD screen, the Sonos ZonePlayer (a networked audio player) and a set of satellite speakers that can be placed around your house, the Sonos system even allows you to listen to different music in different rooms at the same time.

Jesse Terry

Sonos Digital Music System MSRP: \$1199; www.sonos.com

EYEBALL ASSAULT WEAPON

For two years, the folks at ArKaos have tried to carve their way into the fickle, artsy hearts of underground VJs the world over by pushing their user-friendly video sampler software. Looking back on everyone’s collective expectations for the VJ revolution, it’s pretty clear that the only people to have truly profited were the digital video camera and projector manufacturers—not software companies.

Older and wiser, ArKaos is now making a play for the more lucrative markets of high-end dance clubs and production studios by introducing their vision of the all-in-one professional VJ dream machine. The **KaosBox III** is an enormous PC-based workstation running the latest version of the ArKaos software, along with three built-in TFT monitor screens, audio in/out, a 49-note MIDI keyboard and all the sliders, knobs, buttons, joysticks and video i/o connectivity you could ask for.

But you may not want to run out and get one just yet, because the sticker price reads like the GNP of a small developing nation. To get your hands on one you’ll either have to roadie for U2 or check Ebay in about ten years. *Chachi Jones*

ArKaos KaosBox III MSRP: \$50,000;

www.kaosbox.com

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Talking shop with Britain's graffiti-bred visual art enigmas.

Words: Matthew Newton
Images: ehquestionmark; at right,
an exclusive work for XLR8R



You've no doubt spied a glimpse of their artistic handiwork; possibly strolled past it at the local record shop or seen it adorning album covers for London's critically acclaimed avant-garde hip-hop label, Lex Records. A psychedelic black and gold crystal wasteland of post-industrial bling is emblazoned across DM & Jemini's *Ghetto Pop Life*, hand-drawn Slayer-style medievalism touts Non-Prophets' *Hope*, and organic '70s-inspired calligraphy and leftover coffee cup stains evoke the feeling of Boom Bip's *Seed to Sun*, *Corymb*, and assorted 12"s. But who are the visual upstarts responsible for these brazen designs? Assuming the collective identity ehquestionmark, this UK-based visual arts collective has risen through the rank and file of the underground—first garnering attention with their graffiti magazine *HoldNoHostage*, then dramatically altering the aesthetics of hip-hop album art with envelope-pushing designs.

"*HoldNoHostage* was spotted by Lex Records, who asked us to take on the job of guiding the label's printed aesthetic," says Bhat, ehquestion-

mark's reluctant spokesman. "It's good to work for people that appreciate the level of what we do. Lex trusts us enough to give full creative freedom."

Hailing from undisclosed locations (these gents are secretive) throughout England, ehquestionmark's clandestine nature is understandable—any successful creative ambush relies on the element of surprise. With its unconventional design style—hand-drawn typography blended with deconstructed imagery—the crew's work is markedly different from the visuals plastered on your *average* hip-hop album sleeve. Sometimes dark in its approach, other times satirical, ehquestionmark flips the script for each new endeavor. Biters beware—in this realm, there's no room for imposters.

"There's too many pretenders and stale profiteering cowboys in both [graffiti and design] at the moment,"





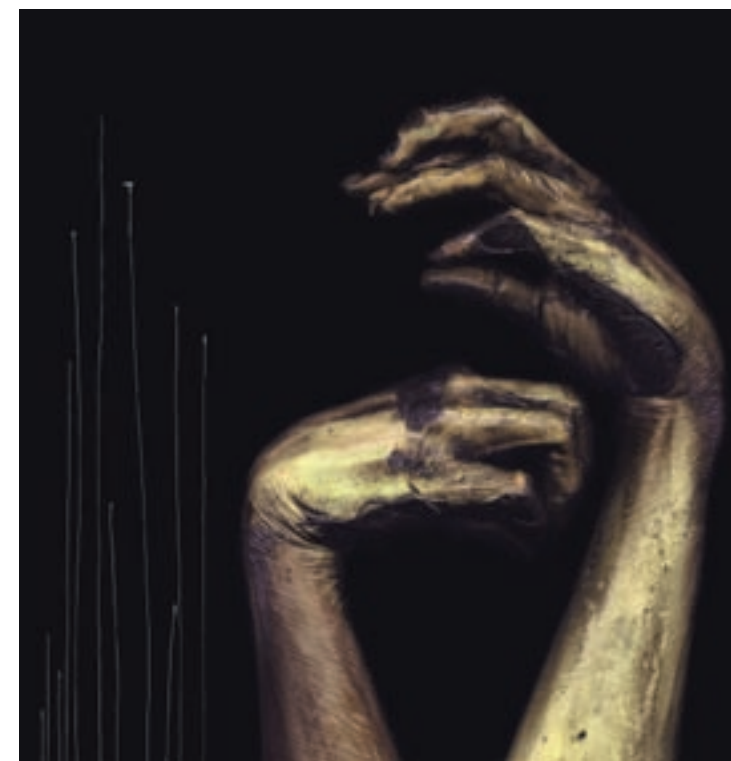
are specialists [and] we try not to work for anyone who doesn't respect our work from the onset. We like to be trusted and left alone."

Though Bhat doesn't cite any specific projects, it would seem ehquestionmark has encountered its fair share of disagreements, although they don't seem to have stymied the group's productivity. "ehquestionmark was founded in order for us to gain a livelihood from our skills, to capitalize on our knowledge," Bhat says. "We all have our own, self-gratifying, creatively unrestrained, non-commercial projects on the go which keep us content-working as our individual alter egos or within other crews. We try our best to stay off the corporate machine," Bhat says. "But it's hard. It's hard to do your own shit, make ends meet, pimp yourself just to get some food on the table or to invest into personal work, and still retain your self-respect."

Though ehquestionmark, as a group, may feel they've had to compromise *too* much, graphic designers can sometimes be a persnickety bunch. From an observer's point of view, it's apparent that this collective has turned the hip-hop art scene on its ear and ruffled more than a few musicians' feathers—not bad for a crew still wet behind the ears.

"Our lives are full of contradictions," Bhat says. "Is it possible to work for the devil's rat race without conforming? We think so, as long as we don't give in to greed or ego and take for granted our riches. Some may see us as hardcore [and] some may see us as sell-outs. But we're not linguists, that's why we feel best expressing ourselves aesthetically."

www.ehquestionmark.com



Bhat says. "And [the numbers] are rapidly increasing by the minute, producing an amazing amount of half-baked, [half-assed], half-witted, half-crafted litter that invades our eyes on a daily basis."

Bhat's raw, at times brutal, honesty, is an indicator of the values his crew upholds. ehquestionmark, with its collective identity and forward-thinking approach, represents an evolution in street-level visual aesthetics, where pseudo-graffiti hand styles and played out gothic typefaces are as obsolete as the PC you bought last year. More importantly, this crew understands just how critical the public's short-term memory can be.

"You're only as good as your last shit," Bhat continues. "Plus, [the work's] got to stand up in a decade's time, at least."

As the main force behind Lex Records' distinct printed aesthetic, ehquestionmark places great emphasis on the individuality of each album's design—treating each new project as an opportunity to up the ante. "We've a lot of respect for music packaging as an art form and it's one of the few ways to help the real-format music industry fight the mp3 battle," Bhat says. "It's also one of the few commercial mediums in the graphic world that requests individual creativity—an asset which isn't really taken advantage of by most designers. However, there are still too many constraints. We have to downsize to suit the budget on every piece we do and we have to make the musician happy."

Artistic freedom is a sticky subject for ehquestionmark. Although retaining complete creative autonomy in a profit-driven market is almost unheard of, these folks are bent on obtaining it. "We love to work by ourselves with complete creative freedom—that's when we usually produce our best pieces. Having someone looking over your shoulder is so invasive and restrictive," Bhat explains. "We wish musicians would focus on their trade, [as] we don't dabble with other media. We





TBC: MUSIC'S RESPONSE TO GENOCIDE

A PAIR OF NEW COMPILATIONS
HOPES TO END THE APATHY
SURROUNDING THE CRISIS IN
SUDAN.

WORDS: STACEY DUGAN IMAGE: SEBASTIAO SALGADO

Jeff Antebi is competing with George Bush and John Kerry, but not for votes. He's contending for funds, and it's been a losing battle thus far. As CEO of Waxplotation and sympathizer to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan, he's solicited artists to donate tracks for a compilation—aptly titled *Genocide in Sudan* (featuring tracks by X-ecutioners, Jill Scott, Tortoise, Gorillaz) and in collaboration with the United Nations Refugee Agency—to benefit victims of ethnic cleansing in that region. Despite his initial philanthropic enthusiasm, Antebi found that raising awareness—even for such a seemingly noble cause—is no easy task.

"Ninety percent of the people I approached—and that includes every major record company in the world—have this attitude that there's an acceptable limit to how much can be allocated toward charitable projects," says Antebi. "It was, 'Well artist X has already given a track to the John Kerry campaign or the Vote in the US campaign, so we don't have any more songs.' To have to explain to someone why they should care about people being murdered because of their ethnicity, why they should care about genocide—it seems like such an obvious thing. I really feel frustrated."

In Darfur, every delay costs lives, building upon the already alarming death toll. Most accounts estimate that between 30 and 50 thousand Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa people have died as a result of the ongoing, systematic ethnic cleansing by the joint forces of the Janjaweed (Arab) militia

and Sudanese government troops. While the UN carefully negotiates its second year of peace talks in Nairobi to end the underlying 50-year civil war in Sudan, government camps fill with 1.45 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are continually raped, tortured and murdered inside the so-called refuges.

For Joung-ah Ghedini, spokeswoman for the United Nations refugee agency, the slow response of the international community can be boiled down to the politics of money, power and geography. "I worked in Rwanda, Kosovo and Bosnia, and from a personal standpoint, I saw a lot more support, interest and attention coming in to the Balkans than I ever did to anywhere I ever worked in Africa," says Ghedini. "I think part of it is just the inherent nature of strategic interest. In the case of Bosnia and Kosovo, it was right there in the backyard of Western Europe. And in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq there are very clear strategic interests." Antebi phrases it a bit more succinctly. "At the end of the day, Africa just doesn't have very much juice."

Conversely, Smiley—one half of the breakbeat duo behind Shut up and Dance Music—encountered no obstacles in recruiting London's premier breakbeat artists for his compilation (in collaboration with OXFAM), *Sudan Breakbeat Crisis*, to aid refugees and internally displaced persons of Darfur. The album features new and exclusive tracks by artists like Aquasky, Audio Bullies, Tayo, Supercharged and Shut Up and Dance themselves. In fact, people were so eager to jump on board with the project that Smiley found himself literally turning tracks away. "Over here we've got loads more politically aware people," says Smiley, who claims to fall into political arguments with Americans on every visit to the States. "Look what's going on in Darfur and the [British] government is doing absolutely nothing, and the Americans are doing absolutely nothing. All they're doing is talking and talking and talking. They're quick to go to Iraq, but not to Sudan, because there's no bloody oil there."

At the moment, there are only some 350 African Union troops and monitors in Darfur, and the Sudanese government has made no progress in stopping militia attacks against civilians. "The US has always championed itself as one of the world's leaders. Here we are at the crossroads; we have an opportunity not only as individuals and community members, but as a country to really do something—to set a positive example of how we can be a global leader on humanitarian issues as well as military and political ones," says Ghedini, who hopes that the American government's public support will prompt individual Americans to move forward as Antebi and Smiley have.

"Typically you wouldn't think that someone who's putting together a collaborative CD would link up with the UN refugee agency," says Ghedini, "but I think the link was there because the personal commitment was there."

www.waxplotation.com, www.shutupanddance.co.uk

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